

Medical Women and the Periodical Press: Sophia Jex-Blake, the *Scotsman*, and the Politics of
Anonymity

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Abstract

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Sophia Jex-Blake led the campaign for female doctors that opened the profession to women in Britain. Drawing upon data collected from newspapers, unpublished archival texts, and published reports, this dissertation explores ways in which Jex-Blake's previously unknown contributions to the daily newspaper the *Scotsman* between 1869-1873 enhanced the cultural status and public image of professional medical women. Specifically, this project addresses a gap in the scholarship by announcing and contextualizing the discovery of archival material that proves Jex-Blake secretly worked as a paid journalist for the *Scotsman* throughout her campaign and that she later engaged in a practice of anonymous self-citation when she cited and discussed the *Scotsman* in her autobiographical account of the campaign, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. By drawing attention to previously unknown aspects of Jex-Blake's prolific writing career, this dissertation contributes to existing scholarship on Jex-Blake's impact on the medical

women's campaign as well as women's professional journalism and the role of newspapers in the Victorian period. It offers an important look at the challenges faced by medical women as they attempted to gain authority not only as writers, but also as medical professionals and helps us understand the relationship between the two. Attending to this relationship allows us to better understand not only how Jex-Blake's writing shaped both public perception and the struggle for medical authority, but also the intersection between key institutions of nineteenth century professional life (medicine, education, and the press) and the personal relationships that sustained them.

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Introduction

Sophia Jex-Blake led the campaign for female doctors that opened the profession to women in Britain. As the most visible, influential activist for the campaign in the 1870s, she was the key figure in shaping not only the rhetoric of the British medical women's movement but also the material effects of the campaign itself. An unconventional woman by Victorian standards of feminine propriety, Jex-Blake was a controversial figure in her own time. Many of the biases of her nineteenth-century critics have been perpetuated into the present, impacting the way she is viewed and perceived today. These perceptions persist even as public interest in Jex-Blake and the Edinburgh campaign has increased in recent years. The fact that all of her papers were burned shortly after her death by her partner, the writer and physician Margaret Todd, has also limited historians' understanding of her contributions and strategies. This project will explore ways in which Jex-Blake's contributions to the daily newspaper the *Scotsman* enhanced the cultural status and public image of professional medical women.

While pioneering medical women like Jex-Blake have been the subject of numerous biographical studies beginning in the nineteenth century, the British medical women's campaign has only begun to attract significant scholarly attention over the past few decades. Literary scholars have focused on representations of medical women in fiction, while historians have explored ways in which society responded to changes in women's medical education in Europe and the United States. Research on how the medical women question was mediated through periodicals is quite new, and I am not aware of any in-depth studies on this topic that solely focus on newspapers. Most scholars seem to agree that coverage of the medical women question

“demonstrates how ideas about the medical profession and womanhood were under revision” during this period.¹

Although this is not strictly a biographical project, to some extent this dissertation is a project of recovery and the telling of an important story in which Jex-Blake is the central, or organizing, figure. A prolific writer, Jex-Blake is the known author of numerous publications, including books, chapters, articles, reviews, countless letters to the editor, and more. She frequently appears as a central figure in scholarly studies on the history of women’s education and women in medicine, as well as studies on literary representations of medical women. However, there have been few studies that focus solely on Jex-Blake and her contributions, and to my knowledge none of them focus exclusively on her work as a journalist. Though she is an extremely important historical figure, she is not widely known; print copies of her narrative account of the campaign, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, are difficult to obtain; and much of her newspaper and periodical work has faded into obscurity. Even biographical monographs on Jex-Blake are relatively rare: to the best of my knowledge, Shirley Roberts’s 1993 *Sophia Jex-Blake: A Woman Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Medical Reform* is the only book-length biography of her to have been written in the past 100 years. Simply put, Jex-Blake’s Edinburgh campaign deserves more scholarly attention, both for its pioneering feminism and for its interest to the history of newspaper publications. While much fascinating and productive work has been done on Jex-Blake’s life and on the medical women’s campaign, projects focusing specifically on her writings and contributions – her newspaper writing in particular - have been scarce in proportion to the historical significance of her contributions and the compelling nature

¹ Alison Moulds, “The Medical Woman Question’ and the Multivocality of the Press, 1869-1900,” 8. 2019.

of her story. Furthermore, much of this important history remains untold, locked away in obscure newspapers and historical archives.

This dissertation addresses a gap in the scholarship in part by focusing on Jex-Blake's writings and editorial contributions for the popular liberal daily newspaper the *Scotsman* during the Edinburgh years of her campaign (1869-1873). The *Scotsman* aimed to support the medical women's campaign and was the chief mouthpiece of the campaign throughout the early 1870s. It is key to understanding Jex-Blake's contributions because it was the primary platform that she used to shape public opinion in Scotland and beyond. This project aims to help explain how one female medical student utilized the newspaper press to shape the professionalization of medicine in the nineteenth century.

While the *Scotsman* is important for these reasons alone, it is also significant because Jex-Blake secretly worked as a paid journalist for the *Scotsman* during the campaign. I announce and describe the discovery of archival material that proves this in Chapter 1. Although she was already known as a published author when the campaign began, Jex-Blake went to great lengths to hide her role as a *Scotsman* journalist from the public, allowing readers to believe that the *Scotsman*'s editor, Alexander Russel, and his male staff had authored her many influential leading editorial articles on the campaign. As I will explain, evidence suggests that the primary reason she guarded this secret was because she believed that preserving the authority and integrity of the *Scotsman*'s detailed record of her battle for medical education in Edinburgh would prevent enemies from disseminating a false version of events to future generations. (She had frequently encountered such efforts and believed they would continue after her death.) The *Scotsman*'s authority, she believed, would protect her historic campaign from misrepresentation

and erasure, ensuring that the story of the “Battle at Edinburgh” would have a lasting impact on the medical women’s movement and women’s chances for success in the medical field.

Perhaps most importantly, Jex-Blake’s unacknowledged self-citation in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* in 1886 helps us understand the ways in which she worked to obtain cultural authority by managing print culture. As I explain, Jex-Blake used a strategy of anonymous journalism to facilitate women’s entry into the medical profession. Moreover, she was able to use her position of influence in the *Scotsman* and her subsequent unacknowledged self-citation of her own writing in her autobiographical texts to fashion influential narratives about the medical women’s campaign and the role of medical women in Victorian society and culture. These narratives had a profound influence on the public perception of medical women.

When Jex-Blake and four other female students matriculated and began their studies at the University of Edinburgh in the fall of 1869, the propriety of female doctors was a subject of intense debate. Indeed when Professor Thomas Laycock told Jex-Blake “that he ‘could not imagine *any decent woman* wishing to study medicine;--[and] as for any *lady*, that was out of the question,’” he spoke for many.² One popular fear was that the study of anatomy and the related practice of dissection, both required components of medical training since 1850, would “defeminize” women.³ Within the medical community, medical men worried that women’s presence in medical schools would curtail discussion of sensitive topics and ultimately diminish the status of their profession.⁴ They also feared that female doctors would create greater competition for jobs in a competitive labor market. As Teja Pusapati has noted, many of the

² Bonner, Thomas. *To the Ends of the Earth*, 11. In re-telling this story, Bonner quotes from Jex-Blake’s first-person narrative of her encounter with Laycock as told in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*.

³ Pusapati, Teja Varma. “Claiming Medicine as a Profession for Women,” 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*

specific rhetorical strategies employed by Jex-Blake and her allies during the Edinburgh campaign, such as testimonies of the success of pioneering female doctors, statements supporting women's right to attain educational and professional credentials, and condemnations of the male medical community's exclusion of women had been utilized by mid-century campaigners for female doctors in the *English Woman's Journal*.⁵ The *Scotsman*, housed as it was at the center of the battle and boasting a circulation of 40,000 during the peak years of the campaign, was able to repurpose and build upon these earlier strategies for a much broader audience. It had a wide - ranging influence in popularizing the medical women question and generating public support for female doctors, as its message was picked up by newspapers and journals all over the world, generating moral and even financial support for the women from well known figures including Charles Darwin and Frances Power Cobbe. Moreover, it gave voice and platform to women who were actually at the center of the campaign.

As I will demonstrate, understanding and contextualizing Jex-Blake's anonymous work for the *Scotsman* provides us with an opportunity to re-assess her strategies and contributions, painting a more complex portrait of an unconventional woman engaged in reform. Without direct access to her personal letters, journals, and other documents, beyond the selections Todd included in her biographical account of Jex-Blake, our knowledge of her personal life and campaign strategies have been limited. The *Scotsman* leaders, then, help us to better understand and contextualize Jex-Blake's complex legacy and engagement with the newspaper press in new ways.

⁵ Ibid., 122.

Chapter 1: Sophia Jex-Blake, the *Scotsman*, and the Medical Women's Campaign of the 1870s

On November 18, 1870 five women walked toward Surgeons' Hall at the University of Edinburgh to take an anatomy exam.⁶ The leader of this group, Sophia Jex-Blake, had recently triumphed when they became the first women to matriculate into a British university following her seven-month battle for admission. Now, one year later, as the majority of the medical faculty refused to teach them and worked behind the scenes to block them from required clinical instruction in the Royal Infirmary, it was evident that their victory was not secure. Encouraged by their professors, many of the male medical students had begun harassing them in the hallways and slamming doors in their faces.⁷ Given this increasingly hostile environment and warnings from concerned friends in the days preceding the riot, it was not a complete surprise when the women turned the corner of Nicolson Street and spotted a dense mob in front of Surgeons' Hall.⁸ As if making an announcement, someone cried, "The damned old bitches!"⁹ Their appearance was followed by a sudden outburst of hooting, hissing, and insults. With Jex-Blake and Isabel Thorne leading the way, the group "walked straight to the gates," which were slammed shut by young male students who blew smoke in their faces and insulted them "in the foulest possible

⁶ Five women students were at the Surgeons' Hall Riot: Sophia Jex-Blake, Isabel Thorne, Edith Pechey, Helen Evans, and Matilda Chaplin. Mary Anderson and Emily Bovell would join them the following year, completing the group that later became known as the "Edinburgh Seven." Jex-Blake's close friend Sarah Kingsley, who had dined at Jex-Blake's house earlier that afternoon, accompanied the women to Surgeons' Hall on the day of the riot and witnessed it first-hand. A devoted supporter of the campaign despite having no interest in studying medicine herself, Kingsley, along with several of the University of Edinburgh professors' wives, frequently lent her support by sitting in on lectures with the women and even penning letters of support for the local newspaper the *Daily Review*, of which her husband, Henry Kingsley (Charles Kingsley's brother), was then editor.

⁷ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 80; 90.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-2.

⁹ *Scotsman*, June 1, 1871. "Court of Session Trial Transcript." Jex-Blake was sued by the leader of the riot the following year for naming him during a public speech. *Scotsman* reporter William Kinnaird Rose, who witnessed the riot, testified during Jex-Blake's trial. When asked how the women were "received" by the crowd when they arrived at Surgeons' Hall, his reported response was: "[T]hey were hissed and hooted. Very foul language was used by the mob. Someone called out—'The d---- old b----.'"

language” as they passed around bottles of whisky.¹⁰ Although a “dense mob” of male students and “gaping spectators” had blocked traffic on a busy road, it would take over an hour for a policeman to appear on the scene.¹¹ When a fellow student surprised everyone by racing from Surgeons’ Hall, wrenching the door open, and helping them through the angry crowd, the rioters became even more inflamed.¹² They proceeded to yell, howl, stomp, and sing throughout the examination. Meanwhile, a few of them rushed through the hallways of Surgeons’ Hall shouting offensive comments, and at one point someone managed to push a sheep inside the classroom. “Let it remain – it has more sense than those who sent it here,” sighed the extramural instructor, Dr. Handyside, before ordering the doors locked.¹³ Concerned for their safety, about two dozen male students agreed to serve “as a sort of body-guard” for the women, surrounding them on all sides like phalanxes. Later Jex-Blake would say that without these men to escort them home through the angry crowd, she believed they would have been subjected to personal violence.¹⁴ So intense was the experience that it was only after she had made it safely home that she realized she was plastered with mud up to her shoulders.¹⁵

The Surgeons’ Hall riot was a landmark event in the medical women’s campaign, generating the kind of publicity and public sympathy for the female students that Jex-Blake had long identified as essential to the success of the movement. Debates on the propriety of female

¹⁰ Ibid., 92.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. Thomas Sanderson, the student who opened the gate to Surgeons’ Hall after it had been slammed shut in their faces, also testified during Jex-Blake’s libel trial. At the time, Sanderson was a medical student in the Intramural School, where he took Dr. Handyside’s anatomy class with Jex-Blake. Students at the University of Edinburgh were allowed to apply up to four courses from the Intramural School toward their degrees, and the female students found a number of Intramural lecturers willing to teach them in mixed classes (with male students) at a time when most University professors refused to teach them even in separate classes. Dr. Handyside was particularly supportive, and following his lead, the male students in his class treated the female students with marked respect. Many contemporary accounts of the riot reflect a belief that the majority of the rioters were students from the University of Edinburgh who were not then affiliated with the Intramural School.

¹³ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 90.

¹⁴ *Scotsman*, June 1, 1871. “Court of Session Trial Transcript.” The *Scotsman*’s published transcript of Jex-Blake’s libel trial, a number of witnesses note concerns about the threat of physical violence faced by the female students. For example, Jex-Blake testified: “I doubt whether it would have been possible for us to get through [the crowd] alone; at least we should have met with personal violence.” She also noted that as they made their way home, one woman in the crowd was struck in the back and another pushed onto the pavement. Sarah Kingsley testified that she returned to Surgeons’ Hall after the exam ended because she was worried for her friends’ safety, and when the mob recognized her, they began to yell and shout.

¹⁵ Ibid.

doctors, the so-called “medical women question,”¹⁶ had circulated in the popular press with regularity throughout the 1860s, but it was only during the Edinburgh campaign and especially after the riot that it began to be treated “with real immediacy and urgency” in periodicals.¹⁷

The “increasingly textual environment” created by advances in technology and literacy rates throughout the nineteenth century created unprecedented opportunities for campaigners to impact public opinion on a range of issues specific to women, and Jex-Blake not only capitalized upon these herself but encouraged her supporters to do so as well.¹⁸ As the most influential activist for the campaign in the 1870s, she strategically utilized Victorian print culture to shape not only the rhetoric of the British medical women’s movement but also the material effects of the campaign itself. While she contributed to numerous publications during the so-called “Battle at Edinburgh,” the popular liberal newspaper the *Scotsman* was the chief mouthpiece of the campaign and the primary publication used by Jex-Blake to influence public opinion in Scotland and beyond. Throughout the Edinburgh campaign, the medical women question dominated the *Scotsman*’s pages: daily news briefs; lively debates in the correspondence section; petition templates; leading editorial articles, or leaders, in support of the women; and transcripts of relevant meetings, speeches, and court trials were published with regularity. All of these strategies were part of a deliberate effort to discredit opponents of the female students while unifying the *Scotsman*’s diverse readership in support of the medical women’s campaign. Jex-Blake had a much greater level of input into its contents than has previously been known. In fact,

¹⁶ Moulds, Alison. “The ‘Medical-Women Question,’” 7. Moulds notes that the term “medical-women question” was sometimes used to describe “debates about the suitability and propriety of women studying and practising medicine” in the nineteenth century. For example, the *Lancet* utilized it in a November 2, 1877 article which states, “The medical-women question is perennial. It knows no limits; we encounter it at every turn – at the universities and at the examining boards, at medical schools and in hospitals, in periodical literature and in works of fiction.”

¹⁷ A few months before the riot the women’s cause had received some publicity over the denial of the Hope Scholarship to Edith Pechey, who had met the official requirement for the scholarship by outscoring all of the other first-year chemistry students, and the university’s decision to give her scholarship to a lower ranking male student.

¹⁸ Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein, *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, 3.

she was extremely conscious of the *Scotsman*'s power and utilized its cultural authority to shape the public's perception of medical women by using a remarkable variety of strategies and voices.

This dissertation announces the discovery of archival material that proves that Jex-Blake secretly worked as a paid journalist for the *Scotsman* and, in point of fact, authored many of their anonymous leaders on her campaign. Although she was already known as a published author when the campaign began and did not aim to conceal all of her other newspaper contributions, Jex-Blake went to great lengths to hide her role as a *Scotsman* journalist from the public and encouraged readers to believe that the *Scotsman*'s editor, Alexander Russel, and his male staff had authored these influential texts. Moreover, years after they were originally published, she continued to cite her own *Scotsman* leaders in other writings, thus using anonymous self-citation as an intentional rhetorical strategy to increase her credibility and amplify her message. In her autobiographical narrative account of the campaign, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* (1886), she conceals the fact of her authorship while praising, quoting, and referencing her *Scotsman* publications in her narrative and her extensive footnotes and endnotes. In fact, she hid her authorship of the *Scotsman* leaders so well that to this day they are still cited by scholars without being attributed to her.¹⁹ Archival materials at the National Library of Scotland including *Scotsman* "Contributors' Day Books" containing authors' names and payment amounts for leading editorial articles and book reviews between 1872-1876 clearly show Jex-Blake to have been the paid author of numerous leaders on the campaign.²⁰ For example, in 1872, a key year of the Edinburgh campaign, she authored eight leading articles on the campaign and two on other topics.²¹ Jex-Blake's use of anonymous publication and self-citation continues to impact

¹⁹ See, for example, Catriona Blake's *The Charge of the Parasols*; Shirley Roberts's *Sophia Jex-Blake: A Woman Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Medical Reform*; and Edythe Lutzker's *Women Gain a Place in Medicine*, to name just a few.

²⁰ "Contributors' Day Books," Jan 1872-Sep 1881.

²¹ *Ibid.*

our understanding of her life, her campaign, and through them the role played by the Victorian periodical press in shaping public events, rather than simply recording them.

The scholarly consensus of the past 150 years has been that Russel supported Jex-Blake in the *Scotsman* by either writing or directing *Scotsman* journalists to write leaders in support of the campaign. As Edythe Lutzker puts it: “*The Scotsman* was in favor of Sophia’s cause, and its editor used his columns freely to defend the principle of medical education for women”²² In fact, it is nearly impossible to find a detailed account of Jex-Blake that does not emphasize Russel’s support of her campaign, in part because Jex-Blake later wrote about it, praising Russel and quoting extensively from the *Scotsman* in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. Moreover, biographers and scholars of Jex-Blake continue to discuss and quote the same passages that she included in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* as evidence of the *Scotsman*’s stance on the campaign. In other words, the accounts of these twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars continue to be shaped and directed by Jex-Blake’s intentional rhetorical strategies.

The discovery of Jex-Blake’s anonymous writing practices helps us to better understand her biographical legacy as well. Kristine Swenson writes of the challenges Jex-Blake’s “lack of convention, her androgyny, and her unsexed behavior” created for Margaret Todd, her biographer and intimate companion of twenty-five years, noting that when Todd wrote *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* shortly after Jex-Blake’s death, she was keenly aware that her subject was a controversial public figure whose flaws were “a matter of public record.”²³ Many of Jex-Blake’s contemporaries blamed her, rather than the medical men who opposed her, for the events in Edinburgh. This perception is significant in our understanding of her strategic use of the

²² Lutzker, Edythe. *Women Gain a Place in Medicine*, 51.

²³ Swenson, Kristine. “Intimate Sympathy and Self-Effacement,” 226.

Scotsman both during and after the campaign. Moreover, the biases of her nineteenth-century critics have been perpetuated into the present, impacting the way she is perceived today. The fact that Todd burned all of her papers shortly after her death has also limited historians' understanding of her contributions and strategies.

In this chapter I provide history and contextualizing information to help facilitate an appreciation and understanding of Jex-Blake's authorial and editorial activities, which I discuss in much more detail in Chapters 2 and 3. In the following section, I explain and contextualize the archival discovery that proves Jex-Blake worked as a *Scotsman* journalist. I follow that with a brief discussion of Margaret Todd's *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* and then a biographical overview of Jex-Blake's life and career from her childhood through her Edinburgh campaign. In doing so, my aim is to help readers obtain a deeper understanding of her personality, her background, and her approach to the campaign. The final section in this chapter contains a brief history of the *Scotsman* and Alexander Russel's work for the paper.

In the Archives

My research on Jex-Blake's connection with the *Scotsman* began in 2017 when I read her first-person narrative account of the campaign, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* (1886).²⁴ The 1886 version of *Medical Women* is a revised and expanded second edition of Jex-Blake's *Medical Women: Two Essays*, which was published by Macmillan in 1872. While she

²⁴ The 1886 version of *Medical Women* is a revised and expanded second edition of a book that was originally published by MacMillan in 1872. *Medical Women: Two Essays*, itself an expanded, revised version of Jex-Blake's 1868 essay, "Medicine as a Profession for Women," was circulated during a key year of the campaign. The 1872 version also employs the same practice of self-citation that Jex-Blake uses in 1886. However, framing of the text in the Preface and the extensive end notes were added in 1886. Specifically, in the 1886 edition, her text was significantly expanded from 135 pages of narrative and 27 pages of notes in the slim 1872 version, to 256 pages of narrative and 99 pages of endnotes, densely packed together in small font, in the 1886 version.

engages in the same practice of self-citation and makes significant use of both footnotes and endnotes containing references to periodicals, newspapers, and other texts in both versions, the 1886 edition is significantly expanded with a Preface, over 120 additional pages of narrative, and 72 additional pages of endnotes. The dense endnotes section, a curated collection of “newspapers, pamphlets, and other papers and books” packed onto each page in the smallest possible font and contextualized with Jex-Blake’s numerous explanatory statements, is large enough to be a book itself.²⁵

As I read *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, I became intrigued not only by her story, but also by her numerous references to and excerpts from newspaper and journal articles, especially the *Scotsman*: Why was Jex-Blake so invested in the *Scotsman*, quoting from it, referencing it, and praising it at seemingly every opportunity? She refers to the *Scotsman* throughout her narrative in lengthy footnotes and a 99-page endnotes section containing an assortment of newspaper and journal articles, academic records, and legal documents related to the campaign that Jex-Blake curated and contextualized with her own explanatory framing statements. “Once more to quote our great champion the *Scotsman*,” she writes in one introduction to a quote from a leading article that we now know she authored herself. In her introduction to *Medical Women*, she self-consciously refers to her emphasis on the “literature of the hour” and looks ahead to the “judgment of the next generation,” as though she is speaking directly to historians of the future:

I have taken a very considerable amount of additional trouble in order to give reference and authority, as far as possible, for all statements that may by any

²⁵ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, viii.

possibility be disputed, and I trust that I have so far succeeded in doing this that any reader having access to the newspapers, pamphlets, and other papers and books referred to, might, without reading a line of my book, reconstruct for himself a story almost identical with that which I have told.²⁶

Here Jex-Blake's use of the *Scotsman* as both a reference and a source of authority is made explicit; in fact, her preface and the inclusion of an extensive curated endnotes section suggests that she may have primarily viewed her revised 1886 edition of the book as a vehicle for the elevation and preservation of these curated historical records. Throughout *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Jex-Blake expresses her concern that a false narrative of the medical women's campaign would be told to future generations. Despite the fact that she had been the central figure in the campaign and was an established physician in 1886 when the revised and expanded text containing the notes and preface was published, she believed that readers would continue to distrust and challenge her narrative, making her appeals to external "reference and authority" essential. At one point she even goes so far as to suggest that the struggle for women's medical education could be erased altogether: "It is more than probable that a few years hence we may be told that no one ever objected to the admission of women to the medical profession!"²⁷

At the National Library of Scotland in 2019, I found evidence for Jex-Blake's authorship in an archive of surviving *Scotsman* business records containing an original, bound contributors' log with the words "Contributors' Day Book" etched on its cover. Seeing Jex-Blake's name listed as the author of well known leading articles that I had long believed to have been written

²⁶ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, viii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, viii.

by Russel and/or the *Scotsman*'s known male reporters was quite a surprise. According to a current *Scotsman* employee who was involved in the donation of the archive to NLS, the handwritten log would have belonged to one of the *Scotsman*'s departmental editors, possibly Russel himself.²⁸ It is organized by date, and each entry lists the author's name, intended article topic, publication date, and payment amount for leading editorial articles and book reviews between 1872-1876. Throughout the log article topics including "Leader, Medical Practice," "Leader, University Court," and "Leader, Medical Women" are all followed by Jex-Blake's last name. These entries correspond to leading editorials in the *Scotsman* published on the date noted in the log and addressing the listed topics for that date. From the Contributors' Day Book, we know that in 1872 alone, Jex-Blake wrote ten anonymous leading articles for the *Scotsman*.²⁹ She authored two more in 1873, as the Edinburgh campaign was coming to an end, and three in 1876, the year the Enabling Bill that effectively opened licensing examinations to women in the United Kingdom was passed. As I will explain in Chapter 2, while contributors' logs for the earliest years of the campaign (1869-1871) are unavailable, evidence strongly suggests that Jex-Blake began writing *Scotsman* leaders on the campaign in 1869, and it is overwhelmingly likely based on both the content of these pieces, which overlap in style and substance with Jex-Blake's signed publications, and Todd's somewhat cryptic references in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, that she continued writing them throughout 1870-1871.³⁰ In the following section, I will provide explanatory framing for *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* because it is such an important - and

²⁸ K.B. to Sarah Ghasedi. Email message, May 13 2019. While I was trying to make sense of the Contributors' Log, a kind librarian at NLS put me in contact with a Communities Content Assistant at the *Scotsman* who was involved in the donation of the Contributors' Log to NLS. This person replied to my query in an email message. K.B. writes: "The first column is date, second is the intended article. The 'do' is actually a ditto mark as far as I can tell. The third column is the author, fourth is the payment and fifth is the word count. The book would have belonged to the one of the departmental editors. It may be that Alexander Russel was that editor but with no records to check I could not say for certain. I'm not aware of anything else that we have held on to regarding the archives, all that had survived was donated to the library." The last line was in reference to my query about the possibility of finding other logs that would allow us to confirm whether Jex-Blake wrote leaders in 1869-1871 as well. It appears that the *Scotsman* office is not currently aware of any existing documentation for those years.

²⁹ "Contributors' Day Books," Jan 1872-Sep 1881. Edith Pechey also appears in the log as the author of one 1872 piece on "national elementary education." Jex-Blake possibly facilitated Pechey's involvement. It would fit the pattern: She invited Pechey to join her in other endeavors as well, such as when she nominated Pechey to join her as a member of the Edinburgh Women's Educational Association.

³⁰ I discuss this evidence in some detail in Chapter 2.

complicated - source of information on Jex-Blake, and I draw heavily from it when I discuss her early life.

Margaret Todd and *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*

The Scottish New Woman novelist and physician, Margaret Todd, was Jex-Blake's intimate companion for nearly twenty-five years, and they lived together for the majority of that time.³¹ As Kristine Swenson explains, while many scholars have been cautious about using modern sexual terms to describe historical figures, most depictions of Jex-Blake today assume that she and Todd were romantic partners: "[T]he degree to which their lives fit theories and patterns developed by lesbian historiography . . . tends to confirm the homoerotic nature of their relationship."³² The two met when Todd became a student at Jex-Blake's Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women in 1886. At the time she was 27 years old, 18 years Jex-Blake's junior. Having learned that the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in Edinburgh had opened their examinations to women, Todd gave up her teaching career to study medicine. As she did not have family in Edinburgh, Jex-Blake invited her to stay at her home (Bruntsfield Lodge). Todd would eventually receive her MD, but her progress toward the degree was delayed by her fiction writing, which she published under the name Graham Travers.³³ In fact, her first novel, *Mona Maclean, Medical Student* (1892), was composed while Todd was a student at The Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women; the novel contains so many direct parallels to both Todd's and Jex-Blake's life experiences that today it is widely viewed as a work of

³¹ Swenson, Kristine. "Writing the Life," 222.

³² *Ibid.*, 222; 238.

³³ Over the past decade or so, Todd's work has received renewed critical attention. Her best known novel, *Mona Maclean, Medical Student*, was championed by Jex-Blake both behind the scenes in her role as Todd's literary agent and in her published reviews of the novel.

“auto/biographical . . . proto-lesbian fiction.”³⁴ Todd would go on to become Jex-Blake’s assistant at the Edinburgh Hospital for Women and Children; her traveling companion; her legatee; her nurse during Jex-Blake’s final illness; and her biographer.³⁵

When she died in 1912, Jex-Blake left almost everything to Todd, including the “almost incredible” volume of papers in her “spacious attics and cellars.”³⁶ Todd lived six years longer than Jex-Blake, and she devoted those years to the composition of *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, which was published in the spring of 1918. As Swenson explains: “At some point during the next few months [following the publication of her book], Todd apparently burned all of Jex-Blake’s papers according to instructions left in her will and, almost as probably, burned her own. On September 3rd, Margaret Todd was reported dead in a London nursing home, having taken her own life.”³⁷ Because Todd destroyed Jex-Blake’s papers and then tragically ended her own life shortly thereafter, *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* is arguably the most important primary source on Jex-Blake’s life and especially her youth, a period for which few other records exist. References to and excerpts from Jex-Blake’s letters, journal entries, and other papers in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* have been heavily cited in all major accounts of Jex-Blake’s life. As Oliver Lovesey puts it: “Todd’s biography, with its selected extracts from [Jex-Blake’s] private papers and letters, is an invaluable archive for research on Jex-Blake’s life and work.”³⁸ Of course, our reliance upon this source is complicated by Todd’s relationship with Jex-Blake and her primary aim for the book, which was to “explain and reclaim a controversial public figure.”³⁹ While I necessarily refer to *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* in my descriptions of Jex-Blake’s life, it is

³⁴ Swenson, Kristine. “Writing the Life,” 224.

³⁵ Ibid., 223.

³⁶ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 308.

³⁷ Kristine Swenson, *Writing the Life of Jex-Blake*, 222.

³⁸ Lovesey, Oliver. “Introduction,” 5.

³⁹ Ibid., 225.

important to acknowledge that these citations cannot always be confirmed because in most cases, the original sources no longer exist. The discovery of Jex-Blake's anonymous writing and practice of self-citation further complicates Todd's biography and creates numerous possibilities for future scholarship on both women's lives and publications, including *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*.

The Burning of Jex-Blake's Papers

When Jex-Blake died, she left behind an enormous quantity of "papers, letters, diaries, letter books, case books and . . . other private documents."⁴⁰ So overwhelming was the volume of these texts that Todd herself frequently seems to struggle for the words to convey their magnitude to her readers in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*. In one such passage, Todd explains:

S.J.-B. had begun life as an early Victorian girl with an exceptionally strong hereditary tendency to store and treasure all sorts of things great and small. Almost in the twinkling of an eye she became a modern woman with a correspondence that ran to dozens, sometimes hundreds of letters in a day, a modern woman with no leisure at all for the always distasteful work of weeding out and destroying. She was always giving, but she never seemed to give away the things of which she would be well-read. Moreover, she always did things on a massive, great spirited scale. If a number of copies of any document were wanted, it was better to get it printed, and, if you were getting it printed, it was safer and

⁴⁰ Swenson, Kristine. *Writing the Life of Jex-Blake*, 222.

cheaper to get five hundred or thousand copies while the type was up. You never knew how important that particular document might become. If any article was nearly worn out, buy a new one by all means, but keep the old one too in case the new one should break down. And so it came about that in her roomie old house, with its spacious attics and cellars, things were stored and stacked and forgotten until their volume was almost incredible to those who had not seen it.⁴¹

Indeed such accounts throughout Todd's biography firmly established Jex-Blake's current reputation as a "somewhat notorious hoarder."⁴² They also serve to confirm Jex-Blake's investment in the preservation of texts. After all, as Todd states in the passage above in what seems to be her understanding of Jex-Blake's lifelong perspective: "You never knew how important [a] particular document might become."

In her biography of Jex-Blake, Shirley Roberts discusses the historical significance of the loss of her papers, rightly noting that given Jex-Blake's important role in medical and feminist history, "her letters and papers would have been carefully preserved."⁴³ No one seems to have been more aware of the significance of the papers than Todd herself, who describes not only their magnitude but also their critical role in helping one understand and appreciate the medical women's campaign and Jex-Blake's role in it. As she explains in one telling reference to Jex-Blake's campaign to open the medical profession to women: "It was only on working through the vast mass of original documents that the present writer formed the faintest conception how tough and persistent the struggle had been."⁴⁴ Why, then, did Todd burn them?

⁴¹ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 308.

⁴² Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 4; Lovesey, Oliver. "Introduction," 5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁴ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 272.

Swenson's assertion that "Todd apparently burned all of Jex-Blake's papers according to instructions left in her will" reflects the current scholarly consensus that Todd most likely burned all of Jex-Blake's papers according to the latter's expressed desires.⁴⁵ For example, Jex-Blake's biographer Shirley Roberts explains the destruction of Jex-Blake's papers by pointing to a "clue" in her will:

I leave my papers, letter books, case books and all other private documents to my residuary legatee, Dr. Todd, but in case she should not survive me, then I desire that all such books and papers should be burnt without examination in the presence of my executor or witness.⁴⁶

Like many others, Roberts concludes that Todd was acting on Jex-Blake's wishes when she burned the documents, writing: "It seems likely that she acted on Sophia's second instruction and burnt the papers when she had finished with them."⁴⁷ While this is certainly one possibility, I am not convinced that Todd was acting upon Jex-Blake's wishes when she chose to burn *all* of the papers.

For one thing, the will itself does not provide proof that Jex-Blake would have wanted Todd to burn everything she had saved. The language within it ("in case she should not survive me, *then* I desire...") reflects only her wish that if Todd did not survive Jex-Blake, the papers would be burned rather than handed over to someone else. This direction can be interpreted as an act of self-protection designed to prevent others from examining her stores of unfiltered papers. It is reasonable to assume that the extent of Jex-Blake's direct involvement with the *Scotsman*

⁴⁵ Swenson, Kristine, "Intimate Sympathy and Self-Effacement," 222.

⁴⁶ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 4-5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

was one of the things she hoped to conceal by adding this passage to her will. Presumably, among the papers she destroyed were records, letters, and other documents that would have helped explain the extent of her journalism during and after the campaign, which is one of the reasons that until now we did not know about Jex-Blake's anonymous authorial and editorial contributions to the *Scotsman*.⁴⁸ Another aspect of her life that Jex-Blake most likely hoped to protect from public scrutiny was her sexuality. Early twentieth century sexologists were rapidly developing new theories of female sexuality, increasing the likelihood her relationships would be subjected to stigma and criticism.⁴⁹ While these factors might explain Jex-Blake's reluctance to have her papers fall into the wrong hands, the passage of her will that follows "in case she should not survive me" was nullified when Todd did survive Jex-Blake, was granted possession of her papers, and had six years to carefully examine them while writing the biography. It seems logical to assume that in all of those years, she could have set aside some of Jex-Blake's noncontroversial papers for posterity if she had wanted to do so. For example, in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, Todd quotes extensively from Jex-Blake's juvenilia, including fictional stories and letters to her mother that she wrote as a young child. It is evident from the excerpts that Todd includes in her book that Jex-Blake was a prolific and creative youth, and it is worth noting that Jex-Blake herself carefully preserved these texts for over seven decades. Why not save even a few of them? Does it really make sense to assume, as we must if we are to believe the currently prevailing explanation, that Jex-Blake privately asked Todd to burn all of her papers regardless of how much time she was able to devote to sorting through them? Did Jex-Blake really want

⁴⁸ As I will explain Todd hints at Jex-Blake's work for the *Scotsman* and her writing of the leaders throughout *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, but like Jex-Blake, she conceals the fact of her authorship of the *Scotsman* leaders, citing them without giving credit to Jex-Blake.

⁴⁹ Jennings, Rebecca. *A Lesbian History of Britain*, 77.

everything burned, even her childhood writings and originals of texts that she herself had quoted in published books and articles?

While working on this project I have come to believe that Jex-Blake most likely did not request the destruction of all her papers. This matters because understanding Jex-Blake's relationship to historical documents, like the ones she stored and preserved throughout her life, is key to understanding of her personality, her goals, and her surviving texts. Of course, it is possible that Jex-Blake had a dramatic change of heart toward the end of her life and made an out-of-character request in private to Todd, but doing so would have run counter to her prior way of being and conflicted with many of her most cherished goals up to that point. Ironically, one thing that Todd makes clear throughout her book is how much Jex-Blake hated destroying letters and papers. In one anecdote, Todd explains that Jex-Blake was occasionally asked to destroy letters from her patients in order to protect the privacy of the letter writers, and doing so pained her greatly: "[T]hat sacrifice meant something, for -- born chronicler that she was-- it was a pain and grief to her to destroy a letter at any time."⁵⁰ Not only was Jex-Blake apparently a lifelong hoarder who could barely bring herself to burn a patient's letter; she was also deeply conscious of her role in history and went to extraordinary lengths to preserve records and documents that would support the narrative she wanted future historians to construct. Thus, my belief that a mass destruction of all her papers was most likely not what Jex-Blake desired is primarily based upon my understanding of her lifelong investment, some might even say obsession, with preserving a record of the campaign and her role in it for future historians.⁵¹ That she would not want what she might perceive as the "wrong" texts to survive makes perfect sense. But that she would not

⁵⁰ Todd, Margaret. *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 162.

⁵¹ I discuss Jex-Blake's investment in preserving a historical record for future generations in much more detail in Chapter 3.

want original copies of her juvenilia, or her campaign letters, business letters, legal documents, and more to be preserved seems highly unlikely given what we know about how hard she worked to preserve her legacy and ensure that the struggle would be remembered. The importance of evidence – of supporting documents, texts – was everything to Jex-Blake, as I will discuss throughout this dissertation.

It is important to keep in mind that when Todd wrote the *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, she was grieving the loss of her closest relationship. Shortly after completing it, she burned both her own and Jex-Blake's papers and then committed suicide. Swenson observes that despite Todd's prominent public identity as a popular New Woman novelist, a Victorian female physician, and Jex-Blake's companion, when she burned the papers, she "virtually managed to erase her personal self from the public and historical record."⁵² This tendency toward self-erasure, writes Swenson, is evident throughout all of Todd's published writing but manifests in its most extreme form near the end of her life after a long period of grief and isolation: "Todd's most dramatic acts of self-erasure—the burning of the two women's papers and her suicide—were preceded by a middle age spent in deliberate seclusion."⁵³ With this context in mind, it seems clear that if Todd did in fact make the decision to burn the letters herself, she likely did so while suffering from the same depression that ultimately took her own life. Thus, speaking of the possibility that Jex-Blake might not have desired or requested the destruction of all of her papers is not itself an attack on Todd's character; if anything, it illustrates the depth of her grief. Ultimately, considering this possibility could help us to better understand both of these fascinating women and the texts that they left behind.

⁵² Swenson, Kristine. "Writing the Life," 222.

⁵³ Ibid.

Jex-Blake's Early Years

Jex-Blake was born in Hastings on January 21, 1840 to Maria and Thomas Jex-Blake. As the youngest of three surviving children in a conservative and deeply religious evangelical family, Jex-Blake's headstrong ways and fiery temper frequently caused alarm and exhaustion. Her relatively older parents – her mother was 39 and her father 50 when she was born – were kindly but expected their daughter to conform to strict behavioral and moral standards. The children were not taught to dance or allowed to attend the theater. They were encouraged to primarily read religious books; *Punch* was considered “vulgar,” and most novels were “trash.”⁵⁴ Of all the members in her immediate family, she was closest to her mother, with whom she seems to have shared a deep connection and sense of humor despite some intense childhood trials.⁵⁵ Her father, already partially retired from the legal profession at the time of her birth, was “soft hearted and companionable,” but frequently baffled by his youngest child. An amusing example of this can be seen in one of the earliest samples of Jex-Blake's handwriting, a reply to her older brother that she composed as a small child: “dear Brother, I must say I think you very impertinent, however I condescend to write to you. If you write a word more nonsense your head shall be off. I am your humble servant grand mogul.”⁵⁶ Her father's simple postscript reads: “Entirely her own composition.”⁵⁷

Jex-Blake's early educational experiences were extremely challenging, both for her and for the adults in charge of her. While her brother Thomas William was receiving a top notch

⁵⁴ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 8.

⁵⁵ Jex-Blake does not seem to have been particularly close to her siblings, Caroline and Thomas William, in part because they were at school throughout most of her childhood.

⁵⁶ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 4.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

education at Rugby School (and later Oxford) that combined intensive classwork with outdoor games and exercise, Jex-Blake was forced to attend a girls' boarding school, where pupils were trained to be "ladylike, pious, and 'accomplished'" in the hope of eventually finding good husbands.⁵⁸ Exercise was generally viewed as harmful to girls, so the most she could hope for was an occasional walk. Todd provides numerous excerpts from diary entries and letters of the period that suggest the lack of exercise and intellectual stimulation at school created suffering for Jex-Blake. Drawing upon these reports, Roberts speculates that "repression and boredom" likely inspired her to "vent her feelings" and act out with impertinence.⁵⁹

One example of Jex-Blake's childhood "impertinence" was later recounted by her former schoolfellow Lucy Portal in a letter to Todd. Portal writes that Jex-Blake "had a strong personality, and was so clever - far above our schoolmistress in natural intelligence."⁶⁰ One day while walking in the downs with an assistant governess on a class outing, Jex-Blake sat on a stone and refused to move:

"What do you mean by this?" said the governess.

"I am tired and must rest," replied Sophy.

"Get up at once," said Miss ---; "Do you suppose we are all going to wait your pleasure in this way?"

"Impossible to do what is beyond one's capacity," was the rejoinder, and threats had no effect. At last Miss --- lost her temper and said "Sophy distinctly

⁵⁸ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁰ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 17.

understand that if you do not get up, I shall leave you here, and send a policeman to fetch you.”

“Ah,” said Sophy “that is a kind thought. I am sure he would prove of great assistance to me. But could you manage to procure two policemen, for I don’t believe one would be able to carry me, and two might do so.” I need not say that the battle of words was soon over after that.⁶¹

As Todd explains and the above example illustrates, Jex-Blake had a “knack of making people ‘uncomfortable.’” She inspired conflict in part because “she was so keen about everything; she staked her equanimity so often on things which it might have been wiser to regard as trifles.”⁶² Such behavior did not go unpunished, and Todd devotes significant space early in the biography to letters from Jex-Blake’s parents and teachers lamenting her unmanageable behavior. While reflecting on these letters, Todd does not hesitate to share her opinion on their approach to child rearing: “The one effort of her teachers, of course, was to repress her, to induce her to be ‘ladylike,’ and, most unfortunately of all, to make every childish act of disobedience, every outburst of passion, the text for a homily on the necessity of ‘coming to Jesus.’”⁶³

Todd also emphasizes Jex-Blake’s early love of reading and writing and her desire to become an author. As a young child between the ages of eight and ten years of age, Jex-Blake created a fantasy world, which she named Sackermena, consisting of an “ideal state ruled by a ‘despotic emperor’ in some wonderful islands lying in an unknown sea.”⁶⁴ These writings include numerous details about laws governing the succession of the throne and punishment for

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 10.

⁶³ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 5.

criminals, and Todd explains that the notes were all written in Jex-Blake's childish hand with no visible corrections or alterations from anyone else.⁶⁵ While Todd is frequently critical of the quality of Jex-Blake's work ("She was unable to throw the creations of her brain into anything like literary form"), she expresses amazement at the quantity of texts that Jex-Blake had produced in her effort to bring the world of Sackermena to life: "[N]umberless papers have been preserved, varying from large official-looking blue foolscap sheets giving the 'constitution' of the state, down to tiny scraps about the minutest detail connected with it."⁶⁶ Todd notes in her assessment of Jex-Blake's world that what stands out most of all is "the staying power shown by the writer in developing her idea, and her determination to get everything down on paper . . . S.J.-B. was a born chronicler."⁶⁷ This trait would remain one of Jex-Blake's defining characteristics as an adult as well.

Throughout *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, Todd includes excerpts describing ways in which Jex-Blake challenged gender norms throughout her life. Even as a young girl, Jex-Blake was unconcerned with issues of fashion women of her class were expected to prioritize. In one of many examples that Todd provides from Jex-Blake's youth, she was reprimanded by her young cousin Ellie for her lack of attention to dress and outward appearance: "You know you are the last person in the world I should copy in dress, or would trust to get one for me, for it is the only thing almost you know nothing about, and you have very peculiar, and, I think, generally bad taste."⁶⁸ Even Jex-Blake's brother, who would later take her side and offer moral support during the Edinburgh campaign, became increasingly critical of her appearance, her "boyish temperament," and her refusal to "grow up like the sisters of other men" as he entered young

⁶⁵ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 10.

⁶⁶ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

adulthood.⁶⁹ This led to a strained relationship between the two siblings, and Jex-Blake's belief that her brother's "influences and representations" were sometimes responsible for "the strictures of her parents" did not help matters.⁷⁰ The following letter from her father during this period is representative of many that Todd cites: "Do you think, darling . . . that by divine grace you are less self-willed day by day? How earnestly do I desire to see you a loving happy child. Everybody seems to deprecate your presence as that which will spread discomfort all around . . . God bless you and keep you and give you His Holy Spirit to guide you continually."⁷¹ The idea that Jex-Blake was problematic because of her androgyny, her willful personality, and her tendency to "spread discomfort all around" would continue to be impressed upon her in countless ways throughout her life.

A Student at Queen's College

In 1858 Jex-Blake, now a young woman of eighteen, learned of the existence of Queen's College from a friend and convinced her parents to allow her to enroll later that year. After what she had endured at school during her childhood, Jex-Blake was desperate to receive a quality education. At this point in her life she was already considering teaching as a profession, a fact which astonished her family mostly because no one had ever expected her to work at all.⁷² Her resistant father refused to give her permission to attend school until she apparently terrified him with her powerful emotions on the subject. As she put it in her diary: "Tried to speak to Daddy last night. He very impracticable, I after a while very undutiful. At last I went into hysterics

⁶⁹ Ibid., 18

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 19

⁷² Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 18.

which frightened him dreadfully, poor old man. I shall certainly go, I think.”⁷³ Jex-Blake was ecstatic. At a time when most of the three hundred female students at Queen’s were taking one or two subjects, she enrolled in seven.⁷⁴ “I am as happy as a queen,” she wrote in her diary shortly after beginning her studies. “Work and independence! What can be more charming?”⁷⁵ It was while studying at Queen’s that Jex-Blake met and befriended the social reformer Octavia Hill, with whom she formed an intense relationship. Most scholars have concluded that Hill was likely Jex-Blake’s first love – and first heartbreak. When Hill ended the relationship, Jex-Blake was devastated. For decades she maintained hope that they would reconcile; in fact, Hill was a beneficiary in Jex-Blake’s will until quite late in her life.

Less than two months after beginning her studies at Queen’s, Jex-Blake was asked to take the paid position of mathematical tutor. Her father was opposed to the idea that she would receive payment for her work, and she debated this with him in a series of letters that Todd appears to reprint in full in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*. Her father argues that to be paid for the tutorship “would be quite beneath you, darling, and I cannot consent to it.”⁷⁶ He suggests that she take the post as one of honor, but refuse the money. She responds with the argument that her gender should not prevent her from being paid for her tutoring work. As she puts it:

It is right and natural I think, I certainly do work equivalent to the payment, and have fairly earned it. Why should I not take it? You as a man, did your work and received your payment, and no one thought it any degradation, but a fair exchange. Why should the difference of my sex alter the laws of right and honor?

⁷³ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 38

⁷⁴ Roberts, Shirley *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 19.

⁷⁵ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

. . . Then there is the honest, and I believe, perfectly justifiable pride of earning. Did you not feel this when you received your first salary? Why should I be deprived of it?⁷⁷

Jex-Blake's questions to her father here bring to mind some of her later writings on the refusal of her opponents on the medical women question to see that "an argument cuts two ways."⁷⁸ She also includes a note about the possibility of her future as a writer: "If I wrote a book I should receive payment for that, and I presume even you would not object: why then now?"⁷⁹ Her father refuses again, and in a long letter containing themes that would re-emerge in her later writings on behalf of female doctors, she repeats many of her key arguments, making a philosophical case for women's employment. At one point her father compares her position to that of her brother, who must support his family by finding a position "which can only be filled by a first-class man of character," to which Jex-Blake responds in part:

I do not think that your arguments respecting the relative position of (at least) Tom and myself are much better than 'distinctions without differences' . . . As far as I can trace the foundation of your asserted difference it is first his being a 'man,' which difference, as I said before, I cannot recognize as radical . . . I will promise you for this term only (not ceding the principle) not to take any fees . . . Remember and understand, Daddy, I do promise this simply and only because you wish it, and not because in the least degree my mind is one whit altered on the

⁷⁷ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 42.

⁷⁸ Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Note A, p. 4-5. Jex-Blake's first note in *Medical Women* relates a story from the Edinburgh campaign that illustrates her feelings on this point: "I remember well that in the time of our Edinburgh struggle, a medical student was canvassing for votes hostile to us at the Infirmary Meeting, and that he urged on one old gentleman this argument: 'But *you* would not like to be attended by these medical ladies!' 'No sir! but it is just *because* I should not like to be attended by a woman, that I will do my best that women shall not be forced to submit to the medical attendance of men!' One would think that the retort was obvious enough, but it is wonderful how few people can see that an argument cuts two ways."

⁷⁹ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 42.

point. I trust you to meet me half way, and not be in any degree grieved if I resume my intention next term.⁸⁰

She almost immediately regretted this choice, writing in her diary: “Like a fool I have consented to give up the fees for this term only – though I am miserably poor. I am sorry. It was foolish. It only defers the struggle.”⁸¹ This exchange between Jex-Blake and her father is significant because it shows that Jex-Blake already saw herself as engaged in “the struggle” and saw her future life as a working woman as an inevitable thing.

Jex-Blake’s relationship with her father, while loving, was her earliest experience of not being understood by men, and as is evident in these letters, her exchanges with him provided her with early opportunities to practice debating her position on women’s education and roles. In one telling passage in reference to her father, she writes: “Truly to him . . . my whole life is as the ‘sight of dancers to him who heareth not the music.’”⁸² This sentiment is illustrated in another interaction that took place when Jex-Blake was a young woman. After learning that his daughter owned a diary with a lock, her father wondered aloud that she could possibly need such a thing. Jex-Blake writes in her diary: “Daddy says he’s sorry I have anything that ‘wants a lock.’ Hm, how very well he understands me and my wants! Never mind; dear old man, he is very loving and kind if not brilliant.”⁸³

Meeting Elizabeth Garrett Anderson

⁸⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 74.

⁸³ Ibid., 32.

In 1863 while receiving private lessons in Edinburgh for a short time, Jex-Blake attended the first of Thomas Henry Huxley's series of public physiology lectures. There she happened to meet Elizabeth Garrett Anderson,⁸⁴ who contacted her soon afterwards to ask for help with her application to medical school.⁸⁵ Jex-Blake agreed and spent two weeks with Garrett Anderson in Edinburgh, assisting with her campaign in numerous ways. At one point, having drafted a letter seeking public support for Garrett Anderson's application, she amused herself by writing a satirical reply from a "bigoted opponent" and showed it to Garrett Anderson, who suggested having it published in the *Daily Review* under an assumed name.⁸⁶ In her journal, Jex-Blake describes her attempt to rationalize this potential course of action: "We don't sign to it,--and it's what some might say; and, if the *Review* puts it in, it's their look-out." To this Garrett Anderson asks Jex-Blake not to tell her if she did it, and Jex-Blake responds that Garrett Anderson was much like, "Tom, steal the apple, and I'll have half."⁸⁷ Todd concludes her description of this exchange as follows: "A real fighting life lay before S.J.-B.—a life in which she received and gave hard blows," yet through it all "she was simply determined that her converse should be sincere, simply striving to be righteous altogether."⁸⁸ Jex-Blake's biographer Shirley Roberts, drawing upon Todd's account of the exchange, writes that both Garrett Anderson and Jex-Blake immediately decided that publishing a fake letter would be "against their principles of honesty and sincerity, principles to which they both adhered steadfastly through the difficult years that followed."⁸⁹ In her analysis of Todd's biography of Jex-Blake, Swenson writes that Todd's insistence that Jex-Blake was "truthful to a fault" makes her suspect that Todd may have aimed

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Garrett married and subsequently changed her name to Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in 1871. However, I will refer to her as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson throughout this dissertation to avoid confusion.

⁸⁵ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 34.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 73.

⁸⁹ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 38.

to suppress some of Jex-Blake's "indiscretions": "In any case, the selections and exclusions that Todd made became definitive when she destroyed the original record after the biography was published."⁹⁰ It is now evident that Jex-Blake not only published anonymously but that she likely assumed pseudonyms on a number of other occasions.

A Teacher in Germany

After remaining for a short time in Edinburgh to study with individual tutors, Jex-Blake worked for some months as a teacher at the Grand Ducal Institute in Mannheim, Germany. While there she learned to her great disappointment of Garrett Anderson's decision to give up her fight to enter a British university and pursue her medical studies via private tutors and study abroad with the financial support of her wealthy father. For Jex-Blake, Garrett Anderson's chosen path was in opposition to the entire purpose of the struggle at Edinburgh because it did not aim to directly effect systemic change. As she confided to her close friend Dora in an 1863 letter, Garrett Anderson's decision to "content herself with practising after private instruction" and pursue an Apothecaries Hall license was a bitter disappointment.⁹¹ Jex-Blake's expression of disappointment in Garrett Anderson's approach helps us understand many of her decisions in her later life. As she explains to Dora:

If [Garrett Anderson] really resolves now to give up the struggle for a University degree, & content herself with practising after private instruction & Apoth. Hall license I confess a very great part of my interest in her and her cause will be lost –

⁹⁰ Swenson, Kristine. "Intimate Sympathy and Self-Effacement," 226.

⁹¹ Sophia Jex-Blake to Dora. January 1863. British Library.

I sympathized so thoroughly with what I believed her conviction last summer, that her work was emphatically to pioneer, & that her great advantages of independence in money & station were just given her to force a way for those less fortunately situated - & if she gives up the question of a University degree she leaves half the battle unfought. I think it is almost comparatively immaterial whether she individually does or does not practice medicine,--but immensely important that the public recognition of the possibility of female physicians should be gained – If I were she I had rather force my way to a physician’s M.D. through all difficulty & opposition & then die,-than live a long life of medical practice, half recognized, & evading the really central object.⁹²

This piece, written years before Jex-Blake considered medical education as a profession for herself, is consistent with Todd’s portrait of the passionate idealist and provides us with a window into Jex-Blake’s later approach to the campaign in Edinburgh. For her the key point was to open the profession to women in Britain. And to accomplish this it was “immensely important” that there be “public recognition of the possibility of female physicians.” In fact, when, in 1872 the University of Edinburgh offered her and the rest of her original cohort of women students degrees in exchange for a promise that they would give up the bigger fight for newer women students who had enrolled in Edinburgh during 1870 and 1871, Jex-Blake refused. As she had explained to Dora years earlier, “the really central object” was to open the profession to all women, and accepting a degree for herself while leaving that fight would have defeated the

⁹² Ibid. The letter continues: “I don’t know a bit that I’m right,--at all events no man has the right to judge another’s work, ‘To his own Master he standeth or falleth’,--but my feeling is very strong about it – I wonder if you agree with me? Of course the other is the easier,--Even perhaps the most plausible,-- & it would want a very deep conviction, a very complete self-dedication, to give up one’s life to a struggle for a principle in the face of all that must be encountered but I think it is just those qualities & those only that make the ‘Apostles of Civilisation’ whom as Maurice says ‘The age shall scorn, while they save it from the scorn of ages to come.’”

entire purpose of her campaign. It is clear that even before pursuing medicine herself, Jex-Blake viewed the “central object” of applying to medical school as the “public recognition of the possibility of female physicians” and the ultimate opening of the profession to all women in Britain. In that sense she approached the Edinburgh campaign as a kind of case study for the role of women in medicine and for basic equality.

A Girls’ School in Manchester

While in Germany, Jex-Blake developed a plan that had long been in her mind. She wanted to travel to America and visit schools, particularly those in which girls and boys were educated together.⁹³ At this point in life, she imagined herself as a future teacher, and she hoped to help transform Britain’s educational system.

As she was preparing to leave Mannheim, Jex-Blake received a letter from the Rector of Stretford, Manchester informing her that a professor at Queen’s College had recommended that he contact Jex-Blake to request her help establish and later serve as the President of a Ladies’ College in Manchester. The Rector explained that he had two young girls aged 12 and 13 and had been told there were no decent Ladies’ Schools near Manchester, so he figured he might as well make an attempt to create one.⁹⁴ As the official leader of this brief campaign, Jex-Blake visited a number of Manchester schools, spoke to educators, and conducted research. She even managed to convince Elizabeth Gaskell to sign on as an official Visitor to the new school.⁹⁵ After three months in Manchester, Jex-Blake finally left when the plan fell through due to a lack

⁹³ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 43.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

of funds despite her efforts, which had included writing and publishing letters in a local paper.⁹⁶ This experience was one of many in which Jex-Blake used the press to gain public support for a cause relating to women's education, lessons that no doubt enabled her to further hone her persuasive skills and which sharpened her interest in the cause of women's education.

Three Years in America

In 1865, Jex-Blake traveled to the United States to fulfill her desire to tour American schools and colleges. She arrived approximately two months after the Civil War had ended. Almost immediately, she reached out with a letter of introduction to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who invited her to dinner and provided her with helpful advice regarding her proposed tour.⁹⁷

As planned, Jex-Blake visited numerous institutions, including four colleges where women and men were taught the same subjects in the same schools and at least one where black and white students were taught together.⁹⁸ Two years later Macmillan would publish her book, *A Visit to Some American Schools and Colleges* (1867), a monograph describing her visit to four colleges and a number of public schools that focused special attention on Jex-Blake's primary area of interest: "the joint education of the sexes."⁹⁹ While Jex-Blake primarily provides detailed descriptions of each school she visits, her broad goal is to propose alternatives to the male-dominated educational system in Britain. As she explains: "I cannot suppose it to be justifiable to shut any gate of knowledge against those who desire to enter in, whatever be their sex, race, or

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁹⁹ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *A Visit to Some American Schools and Colleges*, 36.

colour.”¹⁰⁰ In her conclusion to the book, Jex-Blake’s interest in opening university education to women in Britain is clearly stated:

I trust that the day is not far distant when English Universities . . . will stand no longer on a ‘bad eminence,’ in refusing that which other countries are more or less ready to grant; that Englishwomen may not be driven elsewhere to seek what their fatherland denies them, or be compelled to confess to foreigners that they have indeed some fruits of liberty of thought which cannot yet be gathered in dear old England.¹⁰¹

Jex-Blake’s time in the United States had an unforeseen consequence: it inspired her with a passion for medicine and a desire to become a doctor. Although she encountered numerous female teachers and students and some prominent female scientists during her travels, by far the most significant and influential person Jex-Blake met was Lucy Sewall, Resident Physician at the New England Hospital for Women and Children. Jex-Blake met Sewall shortly after arriving in the country, and they quickly became close friends, traveling together to Niagara Falls and embarking on numerous adventures. Sewall gave Jex-Blake access to the hospital and provided introductions to female scientists and doctors. When Jex-Blake returned to Boston after completing her college and university tour, Sewall offered to provide her with hospital lodgings in exchange for hospital work. At the hospital, Jex-Blake did the accounting, made Sewall’s prescriptions, spent mornings visiting wards with the doctors, and assisted Sewall in the clinic in various ways, often observing her interactions with the women and children she treated.¹⁰² While working in the hospital, she surprised herself by developing a passion for a subject that she had

¹⁰⁰ Ibid 242.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 250.

¹⁰² Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 242.

previously viewed as “repulsive and nasty.” In a letter to her mother from this period, she writes: “I find myself getting desperately in love with medicine as a science and as an art, to an extent I could not have believed possible.”¹⁰³

By the fall of 1868, Jex-Blake had made up her mind to become a physician. After exploring her options, including a brief campaign for admission to Harvard Medical School, she established lodgings in New York, where she enrolled at Elizabeth Blackwell’s inaugural class at The Women’s Medical College of the New York Infirmary in 1868. She also attended Blackwell’s address at the opening of the Women’s Medical College of the New York Infirmary. For a short time as she began her medical studies, she seems to have been perfectly happy, and one wonders how different her life would have been if she had been able to complete her degree there and establish the co-practice that she and Sewall envisioned building together. However, that was not to be. After only two months in New York, she received notice that her father was critically ill and immediately returned to England only to learn that he had passed away while she was on her journey home.

Medicine as Profession for Women in Britain

Months later, while living with her mother in Brighton, Jex-Blake began to consider opportunities for medical study in Britain. Having long been disappointed in Garrett Anderson’s decision to “abandon the cause” and pursue a private education, and inspired by the community of female doctors that she had worked so closely with in Boston, she decided that it was time for the British universities to open their doors to women. Moreover, now that her father had passed

¹⁰³ Ibid. Jex-Blake qtd. in Roberts 61.

away, she did not want to live too far away from her mother. Jex-Blake would seek admission to a British university. After a few rejections in England, she opted to try her luck at Edinburgh, where she had helped Garrett Anderson campaign for admission in 1862. Bolstered with early encouragement from some of the Edinburgh professors, she had reason to hope.¹⁰⁴ Not everyone was optimistic, however. One prescient warning arrived in a letter from Josephine Butler sent shortly before Jex-Blake's trip to Edinburgh: "The MDS will be the obstacle. They hang together so."¹⁰⁵

In 1869 as she was contemplating her options, Jex-Blake was again contacted by Macmillan, who asked her to contribute an essay to *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, a collection of essays on women's education and roles that was to be edited by the well-known feminist Josephine Butler.¹⁰⁶ As an established author who had long been invested in issues relating to women's education and had now obtained some medical training, medical experience, and connections with a community of medical women, Jex-Blake was a natural choice to author the piece. In the United States, she had worked side-by-side with capable female doctors who successfully ran their own hospital and had gained the trust and respect of their own patients, and she also believed she had seen female patients in Boston who would have remained untreated and ill out of shame, fear, or modesty if their only option had been a male doctor. Her contribution to that volume, a piece entitled "Medicine as a Profession for Women" describes historical examples of medical women and responds to almost every conceivable argument against the training and certification of medical women. For example, when she responds to the popular argument that the study of medicine might injure a woman's character, she does not

¹⁰⁴ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*. David Masson, a key supporter of the new Edinburgh Association for the Education of Women, and his wife Sarah were two of the strongest and most consistent supporters from the early days.

¹⁰⁵ Bonner, Thomas. *To the Ends of the Earth*, 97.

¹⁰⁶ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 78

argue against the idea of women's character itself. Instead, she says womanliness is too deep to be obliterated by medical study. Instead of challenging the claim that it was safe and proper for medical men to treat women, she says it is the feelings of the patient, not the doctor, that must be taken into account. In doing so, she sidesteps the problems associated with attacking males in her profession and also reaffirms the moral qualities of her scientific education and profession while making the argument that women, for moral reasons, should be the physicians of women. Using domestic stereotypes in her favor, Jex-Blake argues that "women are *naturally* inclined and fitted to medical practice" She argues that women were probably the first healers in primitive times and that even in the present, women were usually the ones to care for sick family members. In response to those who supported female-driven family medical care and female nurses, but not female physicians, she writes: "Surely work is in no way degraded by being made scientific."¹⁰⁷

University Allies and Enemies

Upon her return to Edinburgh in the spring of 1869, Jex-Blake did not waste time. She immediately began canvassing for supporters. In *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, she notes that the majority of the professors she consulted in this early period "occupied a somewhat neutral position," not wishing to use their power to exclude women but at the same time expressing alarm at "the magnitude and novelty" of her proposal.¹⁰⁸ Jex-Blake believed that winning over male allies who were willing to use their connections and cultural authority to support the cause was essential to the success of the movement, and she managed to obtain the

¹⁰⁷ Jex-Blake, Sophia. "Medicine as a Profession for Women," 40.

¹⁰⁸ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 72-3.

support of a number of influential male professors, politicians, and publishers, among others.¹⁰⁹

Soon after arriving in Edinburgh, she established a connection with a man who would become her most determined University ally, Professor of Rhetoric David Masson. She had been connected to Masson through Josephine Butler, who knew him through his efforts to expand women's educational opportunities. Masson in turn provided Jex-Blake with letters of introduction to many members of the medical faculty.¹¹⁰ Jex-Blake soon learned that Masson was already familiar with her through her book on American schools and colleges and her chapter on medical women.¹¹¹ "Quiet, rather reserved, kindly," was her brief description of him in her journal shortly after they met.¹¹² Jex-Blake was also delighted to meet Masson's wife, Sarah, herself an outspoken advocate of women's education; the two formed a close friendship that lasted for many years. Given Masson's support both on the frontlines and behind the scenes throughout his career, he appears to have been more passionate about the issue of women's educational and professional opportunities than any of Jex-Blake's other male allies in the University. Supporting the cause was an integral part of his life's work, and he would prove to be an invaluable ally.¹¹³ She was also welcomed initially by members of the medical faculty including John Hughes Bennett, Dean of the Medical Faculty John Balfour, and Sir James Young

¹⁰⁹ Jex-Blake's primary male sympathizers in Edinburgh were Findlay and Russel of the *Scotsman*; Henry Kingsley, editor of the *Daily Review*; Professor of English and Rhetoric David Masson; Professor of Obstetrics Sir James Young Simpson; and Professor of Greek John Stuart Blackie. Later when the case moved to London, Stanton played an important role. Moreover, two male allies died at key times, leaving one to wonder what might have happened had they survived. First, Professor Simpson died in 1870 just as the Edinburgh campaign was beginning. Simpson was extremely influential, and as a member of the medical faculty, which would unite in opposition to the female students, his support could have made a key difference. And later as Jex-Blake sought to establish a women's medical school in London, Professor Antsie passed away at a critical moment. As I will note, Jex-Blake interacted with these men directly, but their wives played an extremely important role as well. In fact, Jex-Blake often sent written requests for support and votes directly to the professors' wives, rather than to the professors themselves, and those connections were very important.

¹¹⁰ Todd, Margaret. *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 221.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² According to Todd, Jex-Blake had a habit of noting new acquaintances' personal characteristics and transcribing conversations in her diary.

¹¹³ Masson was the leading male ally of the Edinburgh Ladies Educational Association, of which his wife was a member, and the female medical students' most vocal advocate within the university. His support was voiced publicly and behind the scenes in meetings and other areas. In fact, Masson was granted an award in – year for his support of medical women, and based on what I have learned of him in the course of my research, I believe his career and his lifelong endeavor to support women's rights alongside his wife Sarah is worthy of further study.

Simpson, an “old friend” of the Blackwells who had employed Emily Blackwell despite criticism.¹¹⁴

However, as Elaine Thompson points out, the power of small numbers of determined men to effect the course of the struggle “worked both ways.”¹¹⁵ A number of medical professors indicated their disapproval in the early days of her campaign and many more would later join them. Jex-Blake herself believed that Professor Robert Christison (“one man and his immediate followers”) was the primary force responsible for the opposition to women in Edinburgh, and the majority of her contemporaries affirmed this view.¹¹⁶

Unfortunately for the female students, Christison was not only Jex-Blake’s most determined enemy; he was also one of the most powerful men in Edinburgh. Often referred to as “Our Nestor” by his students, the Christison of 1869 had been a professor at the University for over 40 years and was the only member of the medical faculty to sit on all four of the governing bodies that would determine the fate of the female students.¹¹⁷ As Owen Edwards puts it, Christison was “supremely the Edinburgh establishment.” Three generations of men in his family were connected to the university, including his father who had been a professor there from 1806 to 1820.¹¹⁸ He was also actively involved in the Royal Infirmary, and he enjoyed “outstanding links” to numerous professional bodies, including the General Medical Council, British Medical Association, and Royal College of Physicians.¹¹⁹ When Jex-Blake began her campaign,

¹¹⁴ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 72; Bonner, Thomas. *To the Ends of the Earth*, 126.

¹¹⁵ Thompson, Elaine. *Women in Medicine*, 31-2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. The “one man and his immediate followers” quote comes from Jex-Blake’s description of Christison in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*.

¹¹⁷ These four governing bodies were: The Medical Faculty, consisting of medical professors; the University Senatus, which included professors from across disciplines; the University Court, which was composed of the Rector, the Principal, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and five other appointees; and the General Council of the University, which consisted of all registered university graduates.

¹¹⁸ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 96. Roberts speculates on the possible reasons for Christison’s “distorted view of women.” She notes that Christison lived in a male-dominated world. He had become a widow two decades before the Edinburgh campaign began, had only sons and no daughters, and worked with men alone. His hobbies of mountaineering and “commanding the University Rifles” ensured that he spent his leisure time with men.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Christison was President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In 1871, as he fought to block the female students from receiving clinical instruction in the Royal Infirmary, he was made a baronet. And as if that were not enough, he also happened to be Physician-in-ordinary to the Queen of Scotland, a position of cultural authority that he would use against Jex-Blake during the campaign when he publicly announced that the Queen herself had told him she was opposed to female doctors. As Jex-Blake herself would later put it in *Medical Women*: “Sir Robert Christison, our chief opponent, was a man of great social and professional influence, and when once he set his whole will to work to crush us out of the University, we practically had little chance against him.”¹²⁰ Interestingly, when describing Christison’s influence in Edinburgh, Owen Edwards notes that Christison had two powerful enemies: Professor James Simson and “his other great enemy in the town, the *Scotsman*.”¹²¹ By taking on the *Scotsman*’s identity, then, Jex-Blake was able to come much closer to matching Christison’s power and authority, making herself a more formidable opponent than she ever would have been otherwise.

One of Christison’s most famous students, Arthur Conan Doyle, would later write that Christison, a leading expert on forensic medicine and toxicology known for his “deep interest in poisons” and his “terrific independence” as an expert medical witness, had provided much of the inspiration for his character of Sherlock Holmes.¹²² In fact, visitors to the Surgeons’ Hall Museum today will find an exhibit describing the Holmes/Christison link; specifically, the exhibit describes a series of Christison’s experiments that involved beating human and animal corpses to determine whether victims’ bruises had occurred before or after death; these experiments were the direct inspiration for a reference to Holmes’s beating of dissecting room

¹²⁰ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 162.

¹²¹ Edwards, Owen. *The Quest for Sherlock Holmes*, 193.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 192.

corpses in *A Study in Scarlet*. In his biography of Doyle, Edwards even goes so far as to argue that Christison (“a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker”) likely provided some of the inspiration for the character of Professor Moriarty as well: “He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them.”¹²³ Suffice it to say that Christison was no ordinary opponent.

Sadly, Professor of Obstetrics Sir James Young Simpson, a strong ally who could have used his power as a well established member of the medical faculty to offset opposition from Laycock, Christison, and others, died unexpectedly in May of 1870 at the age of 58. His death occurred just as opposition to the female students was intensifying via the Hope Scholarship controversy. Simpson was a tremendous support to the female students during the first year of the campaign, and of all Jex-Blake’s allies, he was nearest in longevity and influence to Christison and thus the most well positioned to counter his opposition. Remembered today as the first physician to popularize the use of chloroform for antiseptic purposes in medicine, Simpson was an early advocate for the use of midwives in hospitals.¹²⁴ Like Christison, he was a highly respected and powerful man with longstanding connections to the University and professional organizations. He received the distinction of becoming the first person to ever be knighted for his contributions to the medical field. He too was appointed physician to the Queen of Scotland (in 1847) and President of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh (in 1850). He was also made a baronet (in 1866, five years before Christison would receive the title). Moreover,

¹²³ Ibid., 193. Edwards provides a visual description of Christison’s “wintry, sidewhiskered, austere and formal countenance,” noting that it was one of the most famous in the city. Known for his tall, wiry frame and shock of gray hair, Christison, a fan of rifles and mountaineering, was often seen racing up Arthur’s Peak at a pace that seemed to defy his advanced age. Edwards believes that “this fast moving profile inspired the silhouette of Professor Moriarty in ‘The Final Problem.’” He also argues that Holmes’s comments on Moriarty could apply to Christison: “He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organised.”

¹²⁴ “James Young Simpson.” *Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, “Heritage.” “On 7 April 1853, Queen Victoria gave birth to her eighth child with the successful administration of chloroform. This quickly silenced all opposition to Simpson and his stance on pain-free childbirth. Simpson was subsequently awarded honorary memberships of the most distinguished medical societies in Europe and America and enjoyed more power and influence than ever before.”

Simpson had connections to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, a central battle-ground of the Edinburgh campaign; he had been appointed physician to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in 1850 and had influence there. If luck had been on the female students' side in preserving Simpson's life for even a short while longer, the Edinburgh campaign might have had a different outcome. Jex-Blake would later refer to his death as "a great and unexpected blow to the cause of women's medical education in Edinburgh."¹²⁵

Application to the University of Edinburgh:

When Jex-Blake first applied to the University of Edinburgh in 1869, the University Court initially denied her application, claiming that they could not make a decision "as a temporary arrangement in the interest of one lady."¹²⁶ As she would later explain, the university's choice of words, which were emphasized in the *Scotsman* and other papers, had unintentionally provided a "very palpable invitation to other ladies"; she immediately posted an advertisement in *The Times*, and within months she and four other women jointly renewed the initial application, were admitted, and began their studies as matriculated students.¹²⁷ Her private correspondence reveals that the stress of those months had already taken their toll. As she writes to one friend: "I have had terrible wear and tear to go through the last two months. Edinburgh was very tiring work,--to repeat endless arguments to an endless succession of people took so very much out of one."¹²⁸ Little did she know at the time that she would be repeating the same "endless arguments" for many years to come. In a letter to Lucy Sewell dated July 6th, 1869,

¹²⁵ *The Times*, September 4, 1873.

¹²⁶ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 74.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹²⁸ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 150.

Jex-Blake reveals that she believed the new regulations that had been established for female students were “very safe and permanent”:

The Medical Faculty and the Senatus have both voted in favor of special classes in the University for Women and the University Court at their meeting yesterday passed a vote in favor of the measure. It seems however that there are some legal difficulties about the old Charter, etc., and that the matter will require the sanction of the Privy Council, which will cause delay, but I think no real difficulty,-- for the Queen is known to be favorable to women doctors; and the present government is specially liberal. Indeed it has this real advantage that it will make the whole thing very public and very safe and permanent,-- so that it will be almost impossible ever again to exclude women."¹²⁹

The resolution of the University Court was approved by the General Council on October 29th 1869. The regulations were inserted into the calendar of the University noting in part that women shall be admitted to the study of medicine in the University and that the instruction of women for the profession of medicine shall be conducted in separate classes, confined entirely to women.

The female students' application had been approved by the university, with the stipulation that they would be taught in separate classes by professors who were permitted, but not required to teach them, and because their class sizes were smaller than the men's they could expect to pay as much as four times the fees as their male counterparts. The Edinburgh University Calendar for 1870 included a new section entitled “Regulations for the Education of Women in Medicine in the University.” According to this document, female students were to be

¹²⁹ Ibid., 158.

“subject to all the regulations now or at any future time in force in the University as to the matriculation of students, their attendance on classes, examination, or otherwise.”¹³⁰ The women celebrated. Jex-Blake later wrote that at the time, it seemed as though “smooth water had at length been reached, after seven months of almost incessant struggle.”¹³¹ Elizabeth Blackwell, who had recently settled in London, claimed that it was “the grandest success that women had yet achieved in England.”¹³² What they did not know at the time was that there would be years of struggle ahead, and the women would ultimately be denied the degrees they had worked toward for so many years.

The Edinburgh Campaign

The Edinburgh years would prove to be much more difficult than any of the female students initially predicted. Their first major crisis occurred in the spring of 1870 when Edith Pechey, Jex-Blake’s close friend, housemate, and fellow medical student, qualified for the Hope Scholarship in the spring of 1870 for her work in Crum Brown’s chemistry class. Although Pechey had met the official requirement for the scholarship by placing first of her year on the chemistry prize-list, Brown decided to grant her award to a lower ranking male student. Jex-Blake, with Pechey’s support, then formally challenged the university’s decision to give Pechey’s scholarship to a lower ranking male student, but her appeal was ultimately rejected. While the Hope Scholarship controversy alarmed members of the medical faculty, many of whom had initially assumed that the female students were likely to fail on their own, it also

¹³⁰ Roberts, Shirley. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 90.

¹³¹ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 127.

¹³² Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 161.

generated public support and publicity for the female students.¹³³ The fact that the Hope Scholarship had originally been created from the proceeds of scientific lectures given to wealthy women fifty years prior was an irony that had not escaped the attention of the press. As Swenson explains, many of those who subsequently became supporters of medical women “did so more in the spirit of fair play than from belief in women’s abilities.”¹³⁴ The Hope Scholarship controversy “violated Britons’ sense of fair play and had engaged the interest of journalists and writers,” while the subsequent riot ensured that “the rhetoric of protection against male sexuality” would become central to arguments supporting female physicians.¹³⁵ Charges of unchivalrous, ungentlemanly behavior, which began appearing in the press during the Hope Scholarship controversy, began to circulate in much greater numbers after the riot, and the rioters’ behavior was widely mocked and condemned even in the *Lancet*.

The Hope Scholarship incident also had the unfortunate effect of making a lifelong enemy out of Professor of Chemistry Crum Brown, who had initially been willing to teach the female students in an identical but separate section. Because it was Brown who made the decision to award Pechey’s scholarship to the next male student in line, he received the brunt of the public criticism for that decision. As I explain in Chapter 3, Brown later expressed deep resentment toward Jex-Blake for some of her words and actions during this period. Not only did he refuse to ever teach them again; he also became an active opponent, joining the ranks of professors like Christison, Turner, and Laycock who were determined to push the women from the University. Meanwhile, as the intensity of feelings on both sides increased, other professors

¹³³ Roberts, Shirley, *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 165. Defying these low expectations, the female students had outperformed nearly all of the male students. During their first year, all five female students won prizes in botany, and four of the five appeared on the honors list in chemistry and physiology. Shirley Roberts points out that “this academic success could only be matched by about 30 of the 140 male students.”

¹³⁴ Swenson, Kristine, *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction*, 86.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

who had initially been neutral or even supportive of the women began to turn against them in fear of retaliation from their colleagues.

The Surgeon's Hall riot, which occurred the following November, was a landmark event in the medical women's campaign, attracting international publicity and public sympathy for the female students.¹³⁶ As some publications noted, the same young men who, in the words of one eyewitness, had abused these women in "language that would have disgraced the lowest inhabitants of the Cowgate," would soon be physicians, entrusted to provide medical care for wives and daughters in the most intimate settings.¹³⁷ Adding to these concerns were rumors that the riot may have been inspired – even encouraged – by Sir Robert Christison, Edinburgh's most influential medical professor and the only faculty member who sat on all four of the university bodies that would determine their fate.¹³⁸

"Unconquerable Sophia Jex-Blake"

Florence Fenwick Miller, the feminist journalist and author, studied medicine for a short time alongside Jex-Blake in 1871. Her unpublished memoir offers some insight into what it was like behind the scenes of the campaign during this period. While she was visiting Scotland with her family in 1871, at just 16 years of age, Miller first learned of Jex-Blake's campaign in the

¹³⁶ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 103.

¹³⁷ "THE ROW AT THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS." *Daily Review* qtd in Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 92. The full letter, signed "An Eye-Witness," is also noteworthy as a representation of a number of direct challenges to the medical students and the professors in many letters in the days following the riot: "It happened that I myself saw [male university students] leaving the university in crowds at 5 o'clock, looking at their watches as for an appointment, and hurrying to Surgeons' Hall to join the mob there. May I ask how far this result is to be accounted for by the continual sneering remarks against lady students of which certain medical professors are almost daily guilty in the security of their own classrooms? . . . After yesterday's proceedings, I can only remark that women may surely be congratulated that these female students are so steadfastly working on, notwithstanding all drawbacks, so that their sex in future days may not be obliged to have recourse to such men for medical assistance as some of those I saw yesterday."

¹³⁸ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 94; Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 149.

Scottish newspapers, particularly the *Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* where she notes that “almost daily, reports of discussions, letters, and arguments, occupied a big space” and in which “the subject of women as Doctors of Medicine was being vigorously discussed.”¹³⁹ As Miller came to understand from these papers, female students had been allowed to study medicine at Edinburgh eighteen months prior, but “keen opposition had developed, and had even taken the form of an outburst of violence from the men against the women students.”¹⁴⁰ The effect upon her was of “a spark on tinder”; she had to join the cause.¹⁴¹ To do so, she explains, required that she met the leader of the cause, Jex-Blake herself, to obtain her support and approval. She describes this first meeting with Jex-Blake in some detail:

As soon as my parents had made up their minds to allow me to become a medical student, my mother wrote to the leader of the Edinburgh party, Miss Jex-Blake, and on her invitation we went over from Glasgow to see her, and arrange matters. I well remember the interview. Curiously enough, I can recall quite plainly the look that Jex-Blake fixed on me when I entered her drawing room at her home in Buccleuch Place, accompanied by my mother. It was a keenly scrutinizing look, and mixed with the scrutiny, or immediately following upon it, was a sad wistfulness, a sort of instinctive compassion for the mere child, full of energy and courage, yet untried, eager to enter upon the thorny path and to taste of the bitter cup of the pioneer, by which the elder woman herself was now being tried so

¹³⁹ Miller, Florence Fenwick. *An Uncommon Girlhood*, 102. Unpublished memoir, circa 1920-1930. Wellcome Library Archives. Here Miller, a feminist journalist and trained physician who studied at the University of Edinburgh during Jex-Blake’s campaign, tells the story of her life, devoting several chapters to her time as a student in Edinburgh and one full chapter overview of Jex-Blake’s efforts on behalf of the movement.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Miller emphasizes that it was the newspapers that triggered her interest: “If we had not all been in Scotland at that time, I should not have been fully aware of, and therefore not keenly interested in, the medical women question.”

¹⁴¹ Miller was already passionate about women’s rights before reading about medical women. In her unpublished autobiography, she describes having witnessed three brutal scenes that impacted her views on women as a child: a desperate mother who had been separated from her children, an older woman confiding to her mother about spousal abuse who later committed suicide, and a woman beaten by her husband in the street.

cruelly . . . Miss Jex-Blake was encouraging enough, but her manner was rather brusque and her tone ungenial. She was, as I now understand better than I did then, bearing up under a severe nervous strain. The heavy responsibility to one's 'cause' that a pioneer feels, to do for it all that can be done without injuring it by any false step, is even more trying than is the ignoring or silently enduring the censure, the misunderstanding, the contempt, the hatred, that is ever surging round one from opponents. Miss Jex-Blake was built upon a large and imposing scale. There was nothing light or 'easy-going' in her whole aspect. She seemed to me to be rather stern and hard. I never felt, on the several occasions I was with her, any warmth or magnetic sympathy. She was a first class fighter; charm and grace are often (perhaps necessarily) lacking in such. Her whole career showed her to be deficient in tact and graciousness. But alas: as the French say, "One must have the defects of one's qualities."¹⁴²

Of course this description says as much about Miller as it does about Jex-Blake. However, it does demonstrate that Jex-Blake's manner toward her was serious and businesslike, almost as though she was the captain of a military unit or the head of a business. She did not put on airs in a manner that might have been expected of a woman of her class or intend to charm Miller into liking and idolizing her. Yet as Miller later came to believe, "unconquerable Sophia Jex-Blake" was a "first class fighter."¹⁴³

¹⁴² Miller, Florence Fenwick. *An Uncommon Girlhood*, 102-3.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

At this time Miller also had a chance to meet Jex-Blake's close friend, Dr. Lucy Sewall, who happened to be visiting Jex-Blake from the United States at the time that Miller was beginning her studies, and Miller explains that she was intimidated by Sewell as well:

Dr. Lucy Sewall was on a visit to Miss Jex-Blake, and I encountered both of these ladies at one time, supported only by my mother's presence, and she was not really in sympathy with the proceeding. Dr. Sewell was quite alarming; she wore those terrible spectacles that show the entire eyeball magnified, and as she fixed this piercing gaze upon me I felt an insect under a microscope, but a cheerful, courageous insect, sure of getting out safely presently.¹⁴⁴

While Jex-Blake did not aim to win Miller over with "magnetic sympathy" or warmth, she welcomed her into their group and immediately connected her with support in an effort to ensure that her medical study would be successful. First, Jex-Blake sent Miller to Isabel Thorne, a fellow medical student. Interestingly, Miller seems to have perceived Jex-Blake as much older than Thorne, who was actually about five years older than Jex-Blake and well known for her prematurely grey hair. Nevertheless, in contrast to Miller's description of Jex-Blake as a careworn "elder woman," she presents Thorne as "a charming, gentle-mannered lady, a young wife . . . and the mother of a little family."¹⁴⁵ Thorne seems to have assumed the duty of arranging with the new recruits after they were approved by Jex-Blake. Each recruit was carefully cared for and prepared, as though she was a member of a military unit or team, because her success was the group's success. Thorne recommended a coach to Miller's mother, and with the coach's help, she began to prepare for her matriculation examinations. During this period

¹⁴⁴ Miller, Florence Fenwick "Pioneer Medical Women," 700.

¹⁴⁵ Miller, Florence Fenwick. *An Uncommon Girlhood*, 103.

Miller met Pechey and some of the other members of the original group of female medical students when Jex-Blake, whom Miller refers to as “our leader,” invited her to dinner. She refers to the other medical students as the “First Army.”¹⁴⁶

Miller later describes being escorted to an examination by Jex-Blake after the University authorities tried to prevent them from taking the tests: “Accordingly, Miss [Anna] Dahms, Miss [Sophy] Munday and I presented ourselves, shepherded by Miss Jex-Blake herself, at the Examination rooms next morning, and were given seats and papers, which were duly examined by the University Examiners.”¹⁴⁷ Miller also notes that Jex-Blake did not take examinations that day because had put off her own examinations for the time being to help the new students. This scene also gives us some insight into how much of Jex-Blake’s time was consumed managing the other female students and battling University authorities, in addition to her writing and her medical studies.

Victories Overturned

Between 1871-1873 Jex-Blake led the campaign to a number of major victories, which were later reversed by the medical faculty who had become increasingly willing to go to extremes in their obstructionist efforts. Throughout 1871 the medical faculty worked behind the scenes to ensure that the women were denied access to clinical instruction in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, a degree requirement. After another lengthy battle, the women triumphed once again when the Managers of the Royal Infirmary voted to admit the women students in 1872.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

The medical men and their supporters were so enraged that they walked out of the meeting en masse. Of this episode, Jex-Blake writes, “Failing in this, they then adopted the remarkably dignified course of decamping in a body, accompanied, I must confess, by some ironical cheers from those behind.”¹⁴⁸ Again, the female students’ celebration was short-lived. Unwilling to admit defeat, the medical men decided to pose a legal challenge to the voting process itself. They claimed that firms, which had mostly voted in support of the women, should no longer be allowed to participate in the voting process. Although they had been casting votes for decades as contributors to the Royal Infirmary, it was now being argued that they should no longer be allowed to cast votes at all. Without their votes counted, the female students would be blocked from the Infirmary. The battle over whether Infirmary contributors should be allowed to vote tied up much of Jex-Blake’s energy and blocked the women’s progress for most of 1872. In the early summer of that year the women students, led by Jex-Blake, sued the university and won. They celebrated a major victory in court. In his ruling, the Lord Ordinary directly criticized the University for their case against the women students, noting:

The first article of the [University of Edinburgh’s] regulations is in these words—
 “Women shall be admitted to the study of medicine in the University.” The Lord Ordinary cannot read this otherwise than as entitling the pursuers to be admitted as students—members of the University with the full privileges of students, subject only to the conditions specified in the regulations.¹⁴⁹

Other rulings in support of the women were equally strong. Lord Deas, for example, went so far as to write: “The purpose of the institution was the education of the human mind,—a purpose

¹⁴⁸ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 117.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Appendix, 24.

applicable equally to males and females.”¹⁵⁰ However, even this rather incredible legal victory was short-lived. The medical faculty appealed in the fall of 1872. Arguing for a limitation of their own powers, they now claimed that the University of Edinburgh never had the authority to admit women students in 1869 in the first place, and argued that because they had made a decision that exceeded their own powers, the new regulations for women students were null and void, and the female students had to go.

In December 1872, after a full year of delays and battles in the press, the female students finally gained entry to the Royal Infirmary, a huge victory after being delayed a full year by the medical faculty’s attempts to ban contributors from voting. Again, this celebration was short-lived as well. The university won their appeal in 1873, overturning the female students’ victory from 1872 and effectively ending the battle at Edinburgh. Afterwards Jex-Blake moved to London, where she worked with influential friends to pass legislation in Parliament and founded Britain’s first women’s medical school, The London School of Medicine for Women, despite an initial lack of support from key figures like Garrett Anderson. Even as she opened her own medical school, women still did not have the right to take the qualifying exam and practice medicine in Britain.

Throughout the campaign Jex-Blake was frequently criticized for her so-called blunders. Enemies claimed that she should not have encouraged Pechey to fight for the Hope Scholarship. They criticized her for accusing the leader of the Surgeons’ Hall Riot of being intoxicated during a public meeting. She should, instead, they claimed, have been more like that model female doctor, Garrett Anderson, quietly and independently working while claiming no distinctions for herself. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, Jex-Blake’s approach to the campaign has

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 35.

frequently been contrasted with Garret Anderson's. Many scholars have tried to explain the differences between the two women. In her account of the campaign Catriona Blake provides one of the more useful contrasts when she notes that while Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's role model was Blackwell, "who had experience of opening up the medical profession through her own solo efforts," Jex-Blake's role model was "Lucy Sewell and the women's community in Boston."¹⁵¹ And William Knox sees some of the strategic differences between Garrett Anderson and Jex-Blake over "direct action and peaceful persuasion" as a precursor to "the division between the suffragettes and the suffragists over attitudes to law and order in the early 1900s, and also women's organizations and their struggle for equality throughout the 20th century."¹⁵² Understanding that Jex-Blake's strategy was indeed one of direct action and campaigning designed to explicitly change a system in which men had the power is important to our understanding of her anonymous writing in the *Scotsman*. In the following section I will provide a brief history of the *Scotsman* and explain why it was such an important platform for Jex-Blake as she worked to shape public opinion and institutions.

The Scotsman

In *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Jex-Blake writes that the female students can never repay the *Scotsman* for supporting them in the Edinburgh days when their "one hope and great difficulty was to get the truth fully and fearlessly laid before the public."¹⁵³ Indeed she believed that public support generated through publicity in the press was key to enacting

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 92.

¹⁵² Knox, William. *Lives of Scottish Women*, 70.

¹⁵³ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 50.

systemic change. The *Scotsman* was a centralized print space in which Jex-Blake was able to define the female medical students and women doctors generally as a counterpublic, correct false reports, respond to stereotypes in other publications, and define medical women's professional identities. At the same time, she used it as a mouthpiece for her campaign, doing everything she could to effect change. Later, she used it as a historical reference and a source of authority for female physicians in her time and beyond.

The *Scotsman* was launched as a weekly “political and literary journal” on January 25, 1817 by William Ritchie, a Solicitor of the Supreme Courts and Charles Maclaren, a customs official and the self-educated son of a farmer. Interestingly, the *Scotsman* was initially inspired by Ritchie's desire to criticize the medical profession. He came up with the idea to create it after an article he wrote to expose “gross and indisputable injustices in the mismanagement of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary” was rejected by every paper in Edinburgh.¹⁵⁴ He was further incensed when even his last ditch attempts to have his piece printed as an advertisement were flatly refused. Having forged a somewhat unlikely friendship with Maclaren on the basis of their shared liberal views and indignation at the “the unblushing subserviency of local newspapers to the [Tory] establishment,” he suggested that the two men join forces to create an independent paper that would publish news and opinions ‘without fear or favor’¹⁵⁵ The *Scotsman*'s front page bore a thistle masthead and pledged “impartiality, firmness, and independence,” ideals that would in fact become strongly linked to its public reputation.¹⁵⁶ They chose to publish their first issue on the anniversary of Robert Burns's birthday, signifying the paper's alignment with Scottish identity and rebellion, while its ideals would become strongly linked to its public

¹⁵⁴ Cooper, Charles Alfred. *An Editor's Retrospect; Fifty Years of Newspaper Work*, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. “There were newspapers, but they dared not call their souls their own.”

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 6.

reputation despite its liberal stance. The new paper was so controversial that its first copies were often smuggled to readers who were afraid to be seen buying it. Some of the more liberal “respectable” men got their clerks to subscribe and accessed the paper that way.¹⁵⁷ However, it rapidly gained prominence and respectability, and by the time of the campaign had become the leading voice of the Reform movement in Scotland.

Alexander Russel Joins the Paper

In 1845, Ritchie invited a promising young writer named Alexander Russel to join the paper as his protégé. Russel, who was later described by a colleague as “three Dickens characters rolled into one – with the bald benevolent head and spectacles of Pickwick, the shrewd expression of Sam Weller, and the abrupt enunciation of Alfred Jingle,” joined the paper in 1845 and worked as de facto editor under Maclaren before officially taking over editorial duties from him in 1849.¹⁵⁸ A mostly self-educated liberal, Russel’s early life experiences may have influenced his position on women’s campaigns for educational reform. He had been raised by his widowed mother, from whom he believed he had inherited his intelligence. And one of the first mentors to recognize and encourage his writing talent in his youth was Isabel Johnstone, author and editor of *Tait’s Magazine*.¹⁵⁹ As Alexis Easley has noted, Johnstone “played an important role in legitimizing women’s authorial careers” by increasing the number of *Tait’s* female

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 159.

¹⁵⁸ *Scotsman*, July 19, 1876.

¹⁵⁹ See Cooper, Charles Alfred. *An Editor’s Retrospect*, 227; and *Scotsman*, July 19, 1876. Russel’s acquaintance with Johnstone began during his printing apprenticeship with her husband, John Johnstone. However, it was actually Johnstone’s wife, the well known editor and author Isabel Johnstone, who had had the greatest impact on Russel’s career. In fact, Russel’s obituary in the *Scotsman* directly credits Isabel with inspiring Russel’s literary career: “To Mrs. Johnstone, a woman of taste and culture, is perhaps due the credit of first recognizing Russel’s literary ability; hers at any rate was the merit of encouraging the obvious bent of his mind towards a literary career, and through her he was led into contributing to *Tait’s Magazine* and other periodicals.”

contributors and reviewing texts by female authors.¹⁶⁰ It is possible that Russel's early experiences as Johnstone's mentee and his long-time position at *Tait's* influenced his willingness to elevate Jex-Blake to her position of influence at the *Scotsman*. Roberts notes that Russel "was a man of liberal, humanitarian views," and he expressed these views through the *Scotsman*, over which he exerted considerable political influence."¹⁶¹

Over the next three decades under Russel's leadership, the *Scotsman* dramatically increased its circulation. Following the abolition of Advertisement Duty in 1853 and the abolition of Newspaper Stamp Duty in 1855, advertisements and sales increased dramatically. The *Scotsman* progressed from a small daily to a great sheet, and its price dropped to just one penny, leading to a rapid expansion in both its size and its circulation. By 1855, the paper was ten times as large as it had been in 1817, yet it sold for only 1/10 of the price, making the *Scotsman* accessible to people who before had looked at it as a rare luxury.¹⁶² They moved their offices to 30 Cockburn Street, and circulation rose to a respectable 6,000. In 1864 circulation reached 17,000 per day, but there was concern that "circulation of the *Scotsman* was mainly confined to Edinburgh and its immediate neighborhood."¹⁶³ With the aim of expanding the distribution of the paper, the *Scotsman's* head of business etched out a scheme to expand the paper's circulation by proposing that the *Scotsman's* proprietor would pay for the *Scotsman* to be carried by contract all over the railway systems and guaranteeing that the railway companies

¹⁶⁰ Easley, Alexis. *First Personal Anonymous*, 68-9. Easley notes that Isabel Johnstone worked to both maintain and disrupt the "implied masculinity" of *Tait's Magazine*. For one, she deliberately gave readers the impression that her husband was its primary editor when in fact she held that role. Also, at the same time, under her editorship, the number of female contributors (including contributions from Johnstone herself) grew from approximately 19% to 38%, and she elevated women writers and "women's issues and perspectives" by frequently featuring them in literature reviews. It is possible that Russel's mentorship by a prolific female author, as well as his engagement with other women writers through *Tait's*, impacted his perspective on employing female authors at the *Scotsman*. Of course, this is only one possible factor of many, as Russel held liberal views on many issues and generally supported a number of feminist causes.

¹⁶¹ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 82.

¹⁶² Cooper, *An Editor's Retrospect; Fifty Years of Newspaper Work*, 162.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 167.

would be paid more from carrying the *Scotsman* alone than they had previously made by carrying all other papers.¹⁶⁴ As predicted, their circulation increased enormously.¹⁶⁵

By 1872, during the most contentious period of the medical women's campaign, the *Scotsman* was received throughout Scotland and boasted a circulation of nearly 40,000, with a much greater reach when you consider that its stories often filtered into other papers.¹⁶⁶ That same year they also became the first company to run their own train delivering papers to Glasgow. By the middle of the year, the paper was being received throughout the entire country.

“Russel of the *Scotsman*”

As Russel guided the *Scotsman* through these unprecedented changes, he became the paper's public face. In fact, by the time Jex-Blake met him in the spring of 1869, the *Scotsman* and Russel were one and the same in the public imagination. In his memoir Charles Alfred Cooper, who became the *Scotsman*'s assistant editor in 1868 and its editor in 1880, discusses this phenomenon:

He came to be known as ‘Russel of the *Scotsman*,’ and there have been people who have spoken of him as having broken through the impersonality of the press . . . No doubt the paper bore witness to his skill as an Editor. Everybody, or almost everybody, thought it was an everyday proof of his skill as a writer. It was nothing of the kind; for the reason that the ordinary reader could not disentangle

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 174. Cooper goes so far as to write that in doing so, the *Scotsman* “revolutionized methods of getting newspapers to readers.”

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

what he wrote from what was written by others . . . But he could not write every article in the paper. Yet outside critics attributed all the articles to him; at least they attributed all the best--all that showed humour--to him.¹⁶⁷

According to Cooper, this was a false impression that Russel liked to encourage, especially when the article in question was perceived as witty.¹⁶⁸ Cooper's note that the general public had a tendency to believe that Russel wrote the *Scotsman's* most popular articles, and that Russel himself encouraged this, is very telling. As we will see in Chapter 2, Jex-Blake seems to have capitalized upon this state of affairs throughout the Edinburgh campaign.

¹⁶⁷ Cooper, *An Editor's Retrospect; Fifty Years of Newspaper Work*, 232-5

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2: Sophia Jex-Blake's Anonymous *Scotsman* Journalism, 1869-1872

This chapter will revise our current understanding of Jex-Blake's role in the Edinburgh campaign by contextualizing her efforts to win public support through the *Scotsman* between 1869-1872. Until now, what scholars have known of Jex-Blake's published writing in the *Scotsman* has been limited to her signed responses to specific articles or letters in its lively correspondence section. However, Jex-Blake's signed letters were only one strategy out of a much larger range of anonymous contributions to the *Scotsman* that included both editorial practices, such as proposing topics, soliciting letters, and arranging texts on the page; and written contributions, including pseudonymous letters and anonymous leading articles. It is telling that the public forum is the context in which her published texts are signed; these signed letters appear in the nonprofessional, community section of the paper, where she was able to speak directly to the public as one of them. In contrast, her professional writing (leaders) and editorial practices (soliciting articles, topics) are all anonymous. In employing these rhetorical strategies, Jex-Blake became "first-person anonymous," Alexis Easley's term for Victorian women who aimed to "subvert notions of authorial identity" and manipulate publishing conventions associated with print media "for personal and professional advantage."¹⁶⁹ By publishing and participating anonymously, Jex-Blake was able to profoundly shape public perception of the campaign while establishing a lasting impact on Victorian print culture.

My primary aim in this chapter is to provide the reader with a narrative description of the Edinburgh campaign that centers Jex-Blake's previously unknown anonymous work on the *Scotsman*. Drawing upon published scholarship and archival sources, I use thick narrative

¹⁶⁹ Easley, Alexis. *First-Person Anonymous*, 2.

description to help the reader understand and appreciate what Jex-Blake did and why she did it. While I will examine some of her signed contributions to the paper in the process, I prioritize her influential anonymous writing.

Jex-Blake's Scotsman Contributions

Signed Letters

Throughout the campaign, Jex-Blake contributed numerous signed letters both to the *Scotsman* and other papers. While Jex-Blake's signed contributions to the *Scotsman's* correspondence page have long been known and cited by scholars, they are worth examining in the context of her other *Scotsman* contributions. By addressing the community as one of them, Jex-Blake was able to humanize the female students' plight and correct factual errors from her position as an insider with direct knowledge of events. However, because her signed contributions were gendered female, their effects were limited by readers' preconceived biases and prejudices about women generally and Jex-Blake specifically, and they did not carry the weight and authority of the *Scotsman*. Early in the campaign Jex-Blake was more constrained in her signed pieces and refrained from attacking medical men directly; instead, she used her anonymous leaders to do that work. As the campaign progressed and the medical faculty's tactics became more egregious, her signed texts (as well as her public statements) began to align more directly with her anonymous texts. Not surprisingly, the consequences and effects were different when she challenged the medical community while being perceived as a woman (and the aggrieved party) vs. when she was perceived as the *Scotsman*/Russel. For example, when she criticized medical men directly under her signed name, she was essentially punished for doing

so; both her own supporters and outsiders blamed her for creating controversy with the medical men and not behaving in a conventionally feminine manner. The *Scotsman*, meanwhile, was at times criticized by its opponents, but it was not directly blamed for creating hostility among the male professors or derailing the campaign like Jex-Blake was.

Pseudonymous Letters

While no records proving her authorship exist, there is significant evidence that Jex-Blake frequently published pseudonymous letters on the *Scotsman*'s correspondence page. Todd reveals that Jex-Blake had been thinking about employing pseudonymous letters as a rhetorical device to win public support as far back as 1863 when she and Garrett Anderson toyed with the idea of responding to Jex-Blake's published letter with an imaginary reply from a "bigoted opponent."¹⁷⁰ As I will explain, it is likely that Jex-Blake employed this practice in the *Scotsman*, as a number of letters on the campaign utilize phrases, examples, and witticisms that overlap significantly with her published work.

Editorial Contributions

In addition to publishing signed and pseudonymous letters on the *Scotsman*'s correspondence page and anonymous leading editorials on its main page, Jex-Blake also participated in the arrangement of text and soliciting letters for publication in the *Scotsman*.¹⁷¹ Margaret Todd provides many hints in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* that suggest she worked

¹⁷⁰ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 38. In her biography of Jex-Blake, Shirley Roberts relates an interesting exchange between Garrett Anderson and Jex-Blake that took place while the two were staying in Edinburgh. Roberts notes that after Jex-Blake had a signed letter published in a local paper in support of Garrett Anderson's campaign, she wrote an imaginary reply satirizing "an imaginary bigoted opponent." Garrett Anderson encouraged her to submit it under a fake name; however, echoing Margaret Todd's description of this conversation in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, Roberts writes that "they agreed that to send the letter would be against their principles of honesty and sincerity, principles to which they both adhered steadfastly through the difficult years that followed."

¹⁷¹ Todd, *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*. Throughout her text, Todd drops her readers many clues as to Jex-Blake's work in this regard, as when she writes: "Even on Christmas Day a Sunday [Jex-Blake] had been at the *Scotsman* office arranging with the editor for the alteration and publication of various entries on the following day." Or, "Then to write leader for Monday . . . Wrote paragraphs and finished article. Went down to *Scotsman* office," 209.

directly with Russel on the “alteration and publication of various entries.”¹⁷² It appears that this work involved everything from the selection of texts to the arrangement of text on the page. In this way, she was deliberately using the *Scotsman*’s letters page to shape public opinion, and in doing so she often went so far as to reach out to individuals requesting letters and proposing topics and content.

In one such example, shortly after the male students had filed a petition seeking the removal of the female students from the University of Edinburgh in the winter of 1870, Jex-Blake wrote to her friend, the naturalist and traveler Isabella Bird: “I think it would be of great use if you would write to the *Scotsman* apropos to the “Medical Students” letter of today & say you are glad to see some medical students feel for the female patients . . . there tell some story of the 4 women in 10 houses, & anything else you think of, & sign yourself “District Visitor.”¹⁷³ Bird’s letter, duly signed “District Visitor,” appeared in the *Scotsman* a few days later.¹⁷⁴ As Jex-Blake suggested, she writes of her visit to nine families in a poor quarter of Old Town in Edinburgh, and describes meeting with a number of sick women who could not be urged to see a male doctor. One woman, she notes, even told her directly that “If ladies were doctors, we would have sought medical advice ‘long before.’”¹⁷⁵ Like many *Scotsman* letters of this period, this piece emphasizes the potential risks to women whose modesty prevented them from seeking male medical advice while avoiding the issue of male physicians treating female patients. Although she believed that women should have the choice to be seen by women doctors, in emphasizing this point, Jex-Blake was being strategic in writing to Bird with this request, as she

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ “Sophia Jex-Blake to Isabel Bird,” December 26, 1870. Note: At the National Library of Scotland, the year of Jex-Blake’s letter to Bird is not noted, though the date appears on the letter as December 26th. I was able to identify the year of publication as 1870 based on contextualizing evidence, including the address, stationary, and most importantly, the published *Scotsman* letter of December 29th that followed Jex-Blake’s instructions.

¹⁷⁴ *Scotsman*, December 29, 1870. “WOMEN DOCTORS” signed “A DISTRICT VISITOR.”

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

aimed to build public support for her cause and believed that the desire for female doctors who could treat young women was “the point that hits the public the hardest.”¹⁷⁶

Leading Articles

Jex-Blake’s most authoritative voice was used in her authorship of the *Scotsman*’s leaders. While I have noted that she began writing *Scotsman* leaders in 1869 and likely continued writing them throughout 1870 and 1871, there are no known surviving *Scotsman* Contributors’ Day Books for those years. However, the surviving logs prove that in 1872 Jex-Blake wrote ten anonymous leaders for the *Scotsman*. These clearly identifiable pieces share stylistic characteristics with the earlier leaders, and there is no clear reason why her contributions would have started in 1872. These articles appeared on the main news page directly following advertisements and were written in the *Scotsman*’s collective, implicitly male voice. Of these 1872 leading articles, eight directly focused on the campaign; one article on women’s education mentions the campaign; and only one, on the subject of ventilation and its importance in maintaining air quality and health within buildings, is on a subject unrelated to the campaign.¹⁷⁷

Jex-Blake was paid by the word for writing these, and used her salary to help pay expenses for herself and the other female students. In these leading articles, the *Scotsman* explained and interpreted the most important news stories of the day for its readers. She crafted powerful

¹⁷⁶ Todd, *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 150. In a letter to her close friend, the American physician Lucy Sewall, Jex-Blake replies to one of Sewall’s suggestions, agreeing that “I am sure you are right about women being fitter to understand women.” She then continues with a reflection on what will most appeal to the public: “I wish Dr. Cabot or some leading doctor would publish a pamphlet or something expressing his strong belief in the ‘need of women doctors for young girls. This is the point that hits the public hardest, I think.”

¹⁷⁷ *Scotsman*, September 19, 1872. Leading article, “BY the recent Adulations Act, the Legislature has acknowledged...” This leader focuses on the importance of opening windows to create ventilation inside buildings, a subject Jex-Blake had long been passionate about. She begins by noting the Legislature has recently passed the Adulations Act, protecting subjects from “swallowing poison under guise of food” and forbidding the poisoning of water. However, as she notes, theaters, lectures, and even churches are often closed in, causing people to breathe noxious air: “[I]f we are to have no legislation on the subject, we must combine to protect ourselves from injury and suffering by declaring our intention as a community to go to no more concerts, lecture-halls (and, we may add, churches), unless to the programme or notice of meeting is annexed the all-important announcement -- ‘Ventilation is not utterly omitted.’” As we in the present day seek to improve indoor air circulation in the time of Covid, Jex-Blake’s lifelong and passionate belief in the importance of “ventilation” has special relevance. In *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, Todd cites a number of instances where Jex-Blake insisted upon opening windows and letting air in despite the common belief that doing so was unhealthy. Given her strong interest in the subject, it is not surprising that the only leader she wrote in 1872 that was not focused on women’s education was on this subject. In fact, considering her strong opinions on the importance of ventilation and her frustration with others’ lack of understanding, it is probable that she proposed this article topic herself.

arguments that were instrumental in shaping not only the rhetoric of the medical women's movement, but also the material effects of the campaign itself. Speaking with the authority of the *Scotsman*, she sought to cultivate support for the Edinburgh campaign and unite the paper's diverse readership in support of female doctors. In addition to drawing upon known rhetorical strategies that had been utilized by mid-century campaigners, such as testimonies of the success of pioneering female doctors, statements supporting women's right to attain educational and professional credentials, and condemnations of the male medical community's exclusion of women, Jex-Blake kept her audience informed of new developments in the Edinburgh campaign and interpreted local events for her readers.¹⁷⁸ Increasingly as the campaign went on, she aimed to explicitly discredit, criticize, and expose the medical men who opposed her.

Generally speaking, Jex-Blake framed the Edinburgh struggle as a military conflict; as such, she frequently employed the rhetoric of warfare in her leaders. On one side were the female students and their supporters, fighting a divinely sanctioned battle for education, freedom, and inevitable progress. As Jex-Blake put it in one 1872 *Scotsman* leader, the female students and their allies were "fighting the fight of darkness against light, of monopoly against free trade, of compulsory ignorance against education."¹⁷⁹ On the other side were the "reckless" medical men and their supporters, alternately referred to as "the medical clique," "the exclusionists," and "the trades unionists," who were presented not only as enemies of the female students but of the entire community.¹⁸⁰ Using collective nouns like "us" and "we" to generate unity among her readers, Jex-Blake argued again and again that for their own greed and gain, the medical men

¹⁷⁸ Pusapati, Teja Varma. "Claiming Medicine as a Profession for Women," 122. Pusapati notes that many of the rhetorical strategies employed by Jex-Blake and her allies during the Edinburgh campaign, such as testimonies of the success of pioneering female doctors, statements supporting women's right to attain educational and professional credentials, and condemnations of the male medical community's exclusion of women had been utilized by mid-century campaigners in the *English Woman's Journal*.

¹⁷⁹ *Scotsman*, January 29, 1872. Leading article, "The medical men who, thanks to the Interdict..."

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

had drawn the entire community into “their hopeless warfare.”¹⁸¹ As she put it in one October 1872 leader referring to the medical community’s efforts to appeal a legal judgment in favor of the female students, “Unless the strong hand of the law intervenes to save us, we are doomed to another winter of squabbling, fighting, and trickery.”¹⁸²

Jex-Blake consistently aimed to contest the authority of medical men. She not only called out flaws in their arguments but also attacked their credibility by arguing that their professed, ostensible motivations conflicted with their real ones. She frequently used her leaders to note discrepancies between the doctors’ real motivations and the way they represented their position to the public.

Jex-Blake’s First *Scotsman* Letter

Jex-Blake became familiar with the *Scotsman* in 1862 when she moved to Edinburgh to pursue educational opportunities via independent courses and tutors. While assisting Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in her campaign to gain admission to the University of Edinburgh Medical School during this period, she submitted a letter to the *Scotsman*’s correspondence page in support of medical women.¹⁸³ Jex-Blake’s letter responds to a long leader in support of female employment that had been published in the *Scotsman* the day before her letter appeared.¹⁸⁴ The leader focuses generally on women’s right to seek employment, but at one point the writer

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² *Scotsman*, October 25, 1872. Leading article, “IT seems that, unless the strong hand of the law intervenes...”

¹⁸³ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, June 17, 1862. Signed “S.J.B.” As far as I know, no one else has attributed this letter to Jex-Blake.

¹⁸⁴ *Scotsman*, Monday, June 16, 1862. “THE statement that ‘men must work, but women must weep...’” The fact that this leading article appeared while Jex-Blake was campaigning for Garrett Anderson and just one day prior to the publication of her letter does raise the question of whether Jex-Blake might have written it. Based on Todd’s account of Jex-Blake’s meeting with Russel and Findlay in 1869, it does not seem likely that she had already made the connection. Also, it seems unlikely that Jex-Blake herself wrote this leader, in part because it does not align with her writing style, and also because it contains generalized arguments about “woman’s mind” that conflicted with Jex-Blake’s beliefs. For example, the leader argues that “woman’s mind is generally more rapid, and not so strong, of far swifter instincts, and less prone to reason [than a man’s].”

argues: “[T]here is one kind of work which we humbly but resolutely think women could do and ought to do, and that is to attend to their own sex as physicians.”¹⁸⁵ Jex-Blake’s response to this leader, signed “S.J.B” and published in the *Scotsman* the next day, establishes many of the themes and arguments that she would circulate in the years to come:

SIR,—I think many women will heartily thank you for the expression which your article of this morning has given to many of the truths they have long felt and desired to see recognized. We have heard long enough of woman’s graceful dependence on man—the man on whom she should theoretically depend being too frequently practically a myth... Practical difficulties occur which it will demand the utmost energy and liberality on the part of the Professors and physicians to surmount, but yet which, we are assured, will not be allowed to overthrow (or rather impeded, for a time—for it can be but a question of time) a movement so entirely in unison with the spirit and demands of the age. These difficulties are, however, so real that probably the next generation will find it hard to realise how much they owe to those who at the present moment lend their influence and support to the infancy of a movement which they will see established in its prime.¹⁸⁶

In this piece, which prompted a number of replies in the days that followed, Jex-Blake establishes rhetorical strategies and themes that she would often repeat in the future. She suggests that she speaks for “many women” who have hitherto been voiceless. She recognizes that “practical difficulties” will ensue, but implies that they can be overcome with the support of

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, June 17, 1862. “Lady Physicians.” Signed “S.J.B.”

professors and physicians. She refers to the movement as one that is inevitable (“for it can be but a question of time”) and in alignment with contemporary, progressive values (“in unison with the spirit of the age”), which is an argument that she returns to repeatedly in *Scotsman* leaders and in other publications throughout her own campaign. And finally, her comment that the next generation will find it hard to realize how much they owe to those who lend their influence and support to the movement suggests that even at this early period, Jex-Blake was looking ahead and thinking about how the struggle to open the medical profession to women in Britain would be perceived in the future. It is also noteworthy that writing as a 22-year old with no intention of participating in the campaign herself, she notes that “the next generation will find it hard to realise how much they owe to those in the present,” as this comment not only predicts her own reception in some respects but also reflects Jex-Blake’s forward-looking view, which appears frequently in her *Scotsman* leaders and takes center stage in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. Even at this early period, Jex-Blake was imagining a future in which the battle for women’s medical education was taken for granted or forgotten. This is significant because Jex-Blake would take great care both during and after the campaign to ensure that it would not only be remembered, but that it would be remembered in the way that she wanted it to be remembered.

The following week the *Scotsman* published a short news report, which appeared in a prominent position of the paper just after leaders, announcing that Garrett Anderson’s application to the University had been rejected.¹⁸⁷ At the meeting of the College of Physicians to discuss the admission of ladies, 16 had voted for Garrett Anderson’s admission and 18 against. This close margin is representative of many votes during Jex-Blake’s campaign as well. As she

¹⁸⁷ *Scotsman*, June 23, 1862. “LADY PHYSICIANS.”

would so often note in later years, the female students' fate frequently hinged on the votes of just one or two people.

First Scotsman Leader

Jex-Blake began writing *Scotsman* leaders almost immediately upon her arrival in Edinburgh in 1869. Fortunately for her, both Russel and the *Scotsman*'s soon-to-be leading proprietor J.R. Findlay, were strong supporters of the medical women's movement prior to the beginning of her campaign.¹⁸⁸ In his unpublished journal, Findlay writes of his support for medical women generally, as well as his pride in his relationship with his "good friend Miss [Elizabeth] Garrett Anderson," whom he first met in 1863 while she was campaigning for admission to the University of St Andrews.¹⁸⁹ Findlay praises Garrett Anderson's intelligence and competence throughout the journal, where he professes his strong support for her professional ambitions. By all accounts, Russel was equally if not more supportive. A mostly self-educated liberal, his early life experiences may have influenced his position on women's campaigns for educational reform. He had been raised by his widowed mother, from whom he believed he had inherited his intelligence. And one of the first mentors to recognize and encourage his writing talent in his youth was Isabel Johnstone, author and editor of *Tait's Magazine*.¹⁹⁰ As Alexis Easley has noted, Johnstone "played an important role in legitimizing

¹⁸⁸ Findlay was the great-nephew of John Ritchie, who co-founded the *Scotsman* with Charles Maclaren and later became its sole owner. He was technically a partner when Jex-Blake met him, but it was widely known that he would soon inherit his uncle's portion of the paper. Findlay became the *Scotsman*'s leading proprietor the following year in 1870.

¹⁸⁹ Findlay, J.R. *Diary of J.R. Findlay*. National Library of Scotland.

¹⁹⁰ See Cooper, Charles Alfred. *An Editor's Retrospect*, 227; and *Scotsman*, July 19, 1876. Russel's acquaintance with Johnstone began during his printing apprenticeship with her husband, John Johnstone. However, it was actually Johnstone's wife, the well known editor and author Isabel Johnstone, who had had the greatest impact on Russel's career. In fact, Russel's obituary in the *Scotsman* directly credits Isabel with inspiring Russel's literary career: "To Mrs. Johnstone, a woman of taste and culture, is perhaps due the credit of first recognizing Russel's literary ability; hers at any rate was the merit of encouraging the obvious bent of his mind towards a literary career, and through her he was led into contributing to *Tait's Magazine* and other periodicals"

women's authorial careers" by increasing the number of *Tait's* female contributors and reviewing texts by female authors.¹⁹¹ It is possible that Russel's early experiences as Johnstone's mentee and his long-time position at *Tait's* influenced his willingness to elevate Jex-Blake to her position of influence at the *Scotsman*. As I discussed in Chapter 1, by the time Jex-Blake met him in the spring of 1869, the *Scotsman* and Russel were said to be one and the same in the public imagination, and its anonymous popular leading editorials were often attributed to him. Roberts adds that at this point in his career, Russel "exerted considerable political influence" through the paper, where he was able to express his liberal views.¹⁹² In her biography of Jex-Blake, Todd writes that almost immediately, Russel agreed to do "all that publicity could do" for her cause.¹⁹³ Jex-Blake must have been delighted to have found such powerful allies at the helm of Edinburgh's most influential print platform.

In Todd's *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, selected excerpts from Jex-Blake's diary and private correspondence reveal that Jex-Blake made contact with the *Scotsman* through John Campbell Smith, an influential Scottish lawyer and advocate, on or about March 18, 1869 while the two were guests at a local physician's home. That day as he walked her home, Smith agreed to serve as an intermediary between Jex-Blake and the *Scotsman*.¹⁹⁴ In his letter to her a few days later on March 21st, he writes: "I left your MS. yesterday with Mr. Findlay of the *Scotsman*. I

¹⁹¹ Easley, *First Personal Anonymous*, 68-9. Easley notes that Isabel Johnstone worked to both maintain and disrupt the "implied masculinity" of *Tait's Magazine*. For one, she deliberately gave readers the impression that her husband was its primary editor when in fact she held that role. Also, at the same time, under her editorship, the number of female contributors (including contributions from Johnstone herself) grew from approximately 19% to 38%, and she elevated women writers and "women's issues and perspectives" by frequently featuring them in literature reviews. It is possible that Russel's mentorship by a prolific female author, as well as his engagement with other women writers through *Tait's*, impacted his perspective on employing female authors at the *Scotsman*. Of course, this is only one possible factor of many, as Russel held liberal views on many issues and generally supported a number of feminist causes.

¹⁹² Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake: A Woman Pioneer in Nineteenth Century Medical Reform*, 130. While Roberts rightfully notes that "it was always Sophia who took the initiative in efforts to achieve her ambitions," she implies that it was Russel himself who expressed his views in the *Scotsman*.

¹⁹³ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 142. While beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that Todd's textual representations of Russel and Jex-Blake are complicated by the fact that she likely knew that Jex-Blake wrote the *Scotsman* leaders. I discuss Todd and her role in more depth in Chapter 1 and in the Epilogue.

¹⁹⁴ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 141-2.

think he will give you some help. If nothing be in the *Scotsman* tomorrow, and whether or not, you may call for him at the office.” Smith also shares that Findlay, the *Scotsman*’s proprietor, said that Jex-Blake needed “no note of introduction,” and he would be “happy” to see her.¹⁹⁵ In Smith’s letter Jex-Blake also learned that she was already known to both Russel and Findlay as the author of her first book, *A Visit to Some American Schools and Colleges*, which had received a favorable review in the *Scotsman* in 1867.¹⁹⁶ In her summary of this moment, Todd writes:

Thus began that support from the *Scotsman*, which in the able hands of Mr. Alexander Russel, was destined to be of such incalculable value to the whole Feminist movement . . . [F]rom this moment on, all that publicity could do for the cause was done. For better or worse, the doings of S.J.-B. were about to be writ large for the whole world to read. They were the text round which the whole question was threshed out by countless firesides,--the text on which the life and character of every other women provided a running commentary. Small notion had S.J.-B. of the great flame that small spark was to kindle. In her diary she speaks quite casually of ‘my’ leader,¹⁹⁷ ‘highly approved by Masson.’¹⁹⁸

Indeed just a few days after Todd tells us that Smith left Jex-Blake’s manuscript with Findlay and Jex-Blake referred to “my leader” in her diary, a leading article appeared in the *Scotsman* on the subject of medical women. In this piece, Jex-Blake introduces herself and her application to the *Scotsman*’s readers (“Another lady applicant is now knocking at the gates of our Scottish

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 142.

¹⁹⁶ *Scotsman*, November 18, 1867. “Literature.” Review of *A Visit to Some American Schools and Colleges* by Sophia Jex-Blake.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Given that this line appears directly following Todd’s description of Jex-Blake’s connection with the *Scotsman*, it strongly suggests that the “MS” mentioned in Smith’s letter was authored by Jex-Blake and published in the *Scotsman*.

¹⁹⁸ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 142. As I have mentioned, David Masson, Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, was one of Jex-Blake’s most tireless allies during the Edinburgh campaign. He and his wife Sarah, also a close friend of Jex-Blake’s, campaigned for women’s access to higher education in a number of different settings. This diary entry suggests that Masson reviewed and approved Jex-Blake’s manuscript before it was published in the *Scotsman*.

colleges”) and discusses Elizabeth Garrett Anderson’s 1862 campaign to enter the University of Edinburgh.¹⁹⁹ Given that the timing of the publication of this article correlates with Jex-Blake’s references to “the MS” in her journal, and that passages including references to historical medical women and the implication that supporting her application would bolster University of Edinburgh’s future reputation are similarly phrased in her signed publications, it is evident that this leader was the same manuscript that Jex-Blake asked Smith to take to the *Scotsman*. Her reference to one of her strongest allies, Professor David Masson, and his approval in her diary suggests that she asked him to read the leader and provide feedback before she submitted it. Considering Todd’s hints and references in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, in addition to the timing and content of the leader, it is overwhelmingly likely that this was Jex-Blake’s first leader in the *Scotsman*. This means that she began writing anonymous leaders on the campaign before she was formally enrolled in medical school.²⁰⁰ In fact, given the content and tone of many of the *Scotsman*’s leaders on the campaign between 1870-1871, I believe that many, if not all, of them were authored by Jex-Blake, though unfortunately contributors’ logs for those years have been lost, making it impossible to verify them as we are able to do for the 1872 leaders.

The leader begins with a reference to Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and a reminder that Garrett Anderson had been practicing medicine for many years by this point after becoming a licentiate of the Apothecaries’ Company of London:

MISS Garrett Anderson, who seven years ago strenuously endeavored to induce the universities of St Andrews and Edinburgh to admit her to study for a degree of

¹⁹⁹ *Scotsman*, March 23, 1869. Leading Article, “MISS GARRETT, who seven years ago...”

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*,

Doctor of Medicine, but in vain . . . has, we learn, just been admitted by the Faculty of Medicine of Paris to examination for the degree of M.D.²⁰¹

Jex-Blake continues by explaining that Garrett Anderson (“this courageous and indefatigable lady”) passed the first of six required public examinations with such success that she was “complimented by the President, and cheered by the auditors.”²⁰² Jex-Blake’s opening remarks on Garrett Anderson’s success employed what was at that point a known strategy; mid-century campaigners for women’s medical education had frequently circulated testimonials of the success of medical women like Elizabeth Blackwell in an effort to generate support for their cause.²⁰³ (Interestingly enough, Garrett Anderson herself had recently responded to Jex-Blake’s request for support by bluntly noting that she did not see Jex-Blake as “specially suited” for medical study; this did not stop Jex-Blake from using her success as an argument in support of her cause.)²⁰⁴ Having established Garrett Anderson’s current success and capabilities, Jex-Blake then builds upon Garrett Anderson’s credibility to make a connection between Garrett Anderson and herself:

It is curious to have to notice Miss Garrett Anderson’s continued success in other quarters at the very time at which we have also to record that another lady applicant is knocking at the gates of our Scottish colleges . . . It may well be that

²⁰¹ *Scotsman*, March 23, 1869.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ See Pusapati, Teja Varma. “Claiming Medicine as a Profession for Women,” 122.

²⁰⁴ Blake, *Charge of the Parasols*, 96. As Blake explains, Garrett Anderson believed that “in order to avoid damage to the cause,” only women who were sure of succeeding should be allowed to pursue medicine. This is one of the reasons that she opposed the idea of opening a medical college to women, lest the “wrong” kind of woman should enroll and damage the cause for everyone. For Garrett Anderson, small numbers of women quietly succeeding without inspiring controversy was the most effective approach. Todd notes that Jex-Blake was hurt by Garrett Anderson’s lack of support, but nevertheless Garrett Anderson was useful to her as an example of a successful medical woman. Garrett Anderson, not wanting to publicly show a break with other medical women due to fears that it would damage the cause, did not speak out publicly against Jex-Blake until 1873 when the female students were pushed from the University. At that time, Garrett Anderson wrote a famous letter to *The Times* urging all women to quietly pursue their studies abroad and criticizing Jex-Blake’s approach; Jex-Blake’s rebuttal, which was also published in *The Times*, presents a competing argument for why it was important to fight to open medical education to women at home.

public opinion has now so far advanced in this matter that Miss Jex-Blake's application to the Medical Faculty of the University will not be refused at all.²⁰⁵

After establishing Garrett Anderson's success and aligning herself with Garrett Anderson, Jex-Blake also asserts her hope that public opinion might have shifted in her favor between 1862 and 1869 and predicts her own success. In 1862, she explains, no Englishwoman was "engaged in successful practice among her country women," and no European university was educating female doctors. Now it was 1869, and Garrett Anderson had been in a successful practice for three years; moreover, despite many medical men's claims that there was no demand for female doctors, "a very large number of ladies" had sought her services. This had proven that "some women will and can qualify themselves for the medical profession." In this leader, Jex-Blake also asks a question that would later inspire a public debate between herself and Garrett Anderson in *The Times* in 1873; that is, whether female medical students must "be driven to foreign shores" and forced to add the difficulty of studying in a foreign language to the challenge of studying medicine.²⁰⁶ While she grants that some adjustments may be needed for private instruction at public classes, she argues that women should be able to matriculate in the usual way. She follows this by citing examples of female medical students who graduated from Bologna, Padua, and Milan, and others, drawing upon exactly the same examples that she also refers to in "Medicine as a Profession for Women," where she presents a historical survey of female physicians to support her argument that women had fulfilled the role of healers in society for hundreds of years before being pushed out of that role by men.²⁰⁷ She concludes:

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ *Scotsman*, March 23, 1869. Leading Article, "MISS GARRETT, who seven years ago..."

²⁰⁷ Jex-Blake, Sophia. "Medicine as a Profession for Women," 112. Jex-Blake uses many of the same examples in her 1869 chapter, citing degrees granted to women in the Middle Ages in Bologna, Padua, Milan, Pavia, and others as historical examples.

It is, we understand, Miss Jex-Blake's earnest desire that this course should be taken, and though some technical difficulties might probably arise, these could surely be overcome if the authorities desired to overcome them. Fifty years hence it might be a more gratifying reflection for Edinburgh that such effort was successfully made, than that, in common with the other Scotch Universities, she persisted in the traditional *non possumus* till the position became no longer tenable and, and all had at length to yield when concession was no longer a matter of grace but of necessity.²⁰⁸

In this passage Jex-Blake, now age 29, writes with the same forward-looking lens that she employed in the 1862 letter to the editor when she was 22. As she implies in this leader, the University's current stance against the female students will eventually become untenable because the success of the medical women's campaign is inevitable. Thus, the University can either continue to resist progress, or it can admit the women and pursue a course that will lead future generations to look favorably upon it, leading to a "more gratifying reflection for Edinburgh."²⁰⁹ It is worth noting that she emphasizes a similar point in her published essay, "Medicine as a Profession for Women," where she writes that female medical students had "sprung up on all sides," making the English and Scotch universities the only ones refusing to grant women medical degrees: "Is there not one of the English, Scotch, or Irish Medical Schools or Universities that will win future laurels by now taking the lead generously, and announcing its

²⁰⁸ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, March 23, 1869. Leading article, "MISS Garrett, who seven years ago..."

²⁰⁹ This is stating the obvious, but I believe it is worth noting that from our current position 150 years in the future, we now know that Jex-Blake was absolutely right when she said that admitting the female students would lead to a "more gratifying reflection" for both the University and Edinburgh. In fact, the University of Edinburgh today claims Jex-Blake and the other female students as a source of pride even though they were never allowed to graduate and were in fact pushed from the University by a determined group of misogynistic professors in 1873 after being formally admitted and completing years of successful study. In 2019 the Edinburgh Seven were even commemorated as "pioneering women" and granted posthumous degrees at the University of Edinburgh's annual graduation ceremony, and Jex-Blake's face was printed on the cover of the University magazine.

willingness to cease, at least, its policy of arbitrary exclusion?”²¹⁰ Throughout her campaign writing, Jex-Blake frequently asks readers to imagine a future in which those who supported her cause would be praised for having done so.

In emphasizing this point about English and Scotch degrees in her leader, Jex-Blake was touching on a nerve. The University Court Minutes Log reveals that the week after her article was published, a report on the Higher Education of Women was presented to the University Court, and concerns were raised about the reputation of the University and the fact that other universities were creating certificate programs and receiving “applause” for taking the education of women seriously:

[I]t seems most desirable that the University of Edinburgh should take steps to relate itself in a more effective and formal manner than at present to the higher education of women. Your Committee were impressed by the consideration that it would not be for the credit of the University . . . that other Universities of the land should be exercising with the applause of all and for the benefit of continually increasing numbers.²¹¹

It is possible that Professor of Rhetoric David Masson, who sat on the University Court, had informed Jex-Blake of the upcoming presentation and concerns about the University’s reputation. The minutes log also notes that because the University of Edinburgh is a teaching University that does not have the residency requirements of other colleges, it should be “relatively easy” for Edinburgh to do something about this: “[The University of Edinburgh] would be the first in a route in which others are pretty sure to follow.”²¹² Reflected in the

²¹⁰ Jex-Blake, “Medicine as a Profession for Women,” 120.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

minutes is a very real concern about not being left behind, and it is obvious that at this moment in time The University of Edinburgh had the opportunity to take a powerful leadership role. At the next meeting one week later, the University Court approved and adopted the aforementioned Report on the Higher Education of Women.²¹³ Ironically, on that same day, they also determined that they would appeal against the vote of the Senatus, which had approved Jex-Blake's admission to the University.

“Medicine as a Profession for Women”

In July 1869, just a few months after the publication of her first *Scotsman* leader, a large extract from “Medicine as a Profession for Women” was reprinted in the *Scotsman*.²¹⁴ It is worth taking a moment to reflect upon some of the themes in this essay because so many of Jex-Blake's leaders directly draw from “Medicine as a Profession for Women.”²¹⁵ Appealing to the authority of the scientific method, she asks readers to test their prejudices against women in the medical profession by providing women with a fair playing field where they can test their abilities. She argues that for the majority of human history, women were the natural healers in society and that their current status was a modern invention. She also aligns the campaign for female doctors with progress and argues that it is inevitable, as when she writes:

²¹³ “University Court 1869-1872 Minutes Log.” Entry for April 10 1869. Edinburgh Centre for Research Collections.

²¹⁴ The *Scotsman* frames this piece by bolstering Jex-Blake's authority with praise and asserting their alignment with her position: “We believe that Miss Jex-Blake is perfectly justified in maintaining that ‘few people who have not carefully considered the question from an historical point of view, have any idea of the amount of evidence’ that may be adduced in favour of the practice of medicine by women among their own sex; and of this evidence she cites much of great interest. While reading her earnest and very-ably penned plea for the medical education of women, it is gratifying to remember that while this essay was passing through the press, steps were being taken by our own University to throw open the advantages of its medical school to women; and we trust that next session will see regular medical classes established for their benefit at Edinburgh.”

²¹⁵ The *Scotsman* published a lengthy excerpt from “Medicine as a Profession for Women” a few months later. *Scotsman*, Thursday, July 22, 1869. “MISS S. JEX-BLAKE ON “MEDICINE AS A PROFESSION FOR WOMEN.”

There seems to be practically no doubt now that women are and will be doctors. The only question really remaining is how thoroughly they are to be educated and fitted to take their share of responsibility in the care of the life and health of the nation; how far their difficulties are to be lightened or increased; and whether the state of things shall continue by which they are driven into unwilling quackery on the one hand, or made to suffer real oppression from irresponsible authority on the other.²¹⁶

The *Scotsman*'s selected excerpt from "Medicine as a Profession for Women," reflects Jex-Blake's efforts not to alienate the medical community:

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 mischiefs 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.²¹⁷

Here Jex-Blake's comment that these statements "injure the cause they profess to serve" was the primary area of concern. Like other medical women of the era, she had to find a way to argue that women wanted and needed female doctors without alienating members of the very profession that she hoped to join. In making this point, she praises the "honour and delicacy of feeling habitually shown by the gentlemen of the medical profession" and notes that in the vast majority of cases, the motives and conduct of medical men are pure.²¹⁸ She then makes a shift to her main point, which is that "the medical man is only one of the parties concerned," and it is "to

²¹⁶ Jex-Blake, "Medicine as a Profession for Women," 113.

²¹⁷ *Scotsman*, Thursday, July 22, 1869. "MISS S. JEX-BLAKE ON "MEDICINE AS A PROFESSION FOR WOMEN."

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the far more sensitive and delicately organised feelings of his patient” that we must consider the necessity of “women as physicians for their own sex.”²¹⁹ Thus, here Jex-Blake writes that it is out of consideration for the feelings of the female patients, and not the flaws of the male doctors, that female doctors should be made available to female patients.²²⁰

The argument that female doctors were needed not because male doctors behaved poorly but because of women’s feelings was a key argument that Jex-Blake would continue to emphasize throughout the campaign and beyond. In this particular extract she writes of her time at the Boston Hospital for Women and Children, describing her “lengthened experience in it as a student.” She notes that while in the dispensary, she had “over and over again heard rough women of a very poor class say, when questioned why they had not had earlier treatment for certain diseases, ‘Oh, I could not go to a man with such a trouble, and I did not know till just now that ladies did this work.’”²²¹ She writes:

[H]ow often I have seen cases connected with stories of shame or sorrow to which a woman’s hand could far more fittingly minister, and where sisterly help and counsel could give far more appropriate succour than could be expected from the average young medical man, however good his intentions. Perhaps we shall find the solution of some of our saddest social problems when educated and pure-minded women are brought more constantly in contact with their sinning and suffering sisters in other relations as well as those of missionary effort.²²²

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ This is an argument that she will lean into for some time; however, after the Surgeon’s Hall Riot of 1870, that argument will shift as she becomes more overtly critical of the medical community in Edinburgh.

²²¹ *Scotsman*, Thursday, July 22, 1869. “MISS S. JEX-BLAKE ON “MEDICINE AS A PROFESSION FOR WOMEN.”

²²² Ibid.

In making this claim, Jex-Blake was employing a popular argument that female doctors would have the ability to understand and respond to female patients in ways that male doctors could not. Many believed that female patients would confess things to a female doctor that they would not be willing to share with a man. Thus, female doctors would create new medical knowledge about women while employing their “sisterly help and counsel” to alleviate larger problems. Again, as we will see, many of these themes appear in various forms in the *Scotsman* leaders.

Summer Battle for Admission

In the summer of 1869 Jex-Blake was invited by the Dean of the Medical Faculty himself to attend his botany class and Professor George Allman’s natural history class over the summer. As Jex-Blake explains, this suggestion was made because a number of professors were “especially timid about the question of matriculation, and argued that till they had some evidence of probable success, it would be premature to let women matriculate.”²²³ The tentative plan was quickly approved by both the medical faculty and the Senatus, and several of the professors’ wives even offered to accompany her to lectures. As she returned to England to prepare for her summer studies, she learned that “two or three hostile Professors [had] appealed to the University Court,” and a number of the male students had submitted a petition in protest.²²⁴ Jex-Blake would later note that she believed Christison, who was “the only Professor and the only medical man who had a seat in the University Court,” had led the opposition.²²⁵ She received her

²²³ Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 73.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 73-4.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 74-5.

first major blow when the Senatus's decision was reversed by the University Court, which passed the following resolution:

The Court, considering the difficulties at present standing in the way of carrying out the resolution of the Senatus, as a temporary arrangement in the interest of one lady, and not being prepared to adjudicate finally on the question whether women should be educated in the medical classes of the University, sustain the appeals, and recall the resolution of the Senatus.²²⁶

It would not be the first time that one of her hard won successes was later overturned, and it is important to note that opposition to female medical students was enacted within the University long before Jex-Blake and the other women matriculated. As I discuss in Chapter 3, this is particularly relevant in the 1880s when some of Jex-Blake's enemies erroneously claimed that her behavior during the Hope Scholarship incident was to blame for all of the opposition within the University.

Jex-Blake's next leader appears in the *Scotsman* in late June, updating readers on her attempt to obtain admission. Referring to her note of optimism in the first leader, it begins:

We anticipated that liberal feeling in this matter had so far advanced that Jex-Blake would have been admitted, and indeed large majorities both in the Medical Faculty and Senatus voted that Miss Jex-Blake should be admitted to the summer classes at least as a tentative measure. But the outcry was revived against the

²²⁶ "University Court 1869-1872 Minutes Log," April 19 1869.

impropriety of ‘mixed classes,’ and it was ostensibly on this ground alone that the University Court . . . refused its sanction to the proposed measure.”²²⁷

As she notes, other women had since come forward, presenting a petition to the University Senate in which they asked to be admitted and taught in separate classes. As in the earlier leader, this piece presses the argument that women are eventually going to study medicine, and that the Scottish universities have two choices: to block progress or take part in it. She writes:

[T]o refuse such a request as this is practically to shut the door of knowledge in this country in the face of one-half of its inhabitants . . . It seems unlikely that Universities can fail much longer to recognize that providing such instruction forms part of the duty imposed on them by the national trust they hold . . . And we understand that the ladies now knocking at their gates offer very liberal terms to have them opened. They fully recognize the unfairness of asking a professor to lecture to a class of one or two female students at a sacrifice of his time and labour; and they are consequently prepared to guarantee any minimum amount of fees which the Medical Faculty itself chooses to name. They thus seem really to leave the authorities no excuse—either on principle or on pecuniary grounds—for refusal.²²⁸

Here Jex-Blake is using the *Scotsman*’s voice and authority to put public pressure on the University to accept their petition. The phrase “knocking at the gates” that she uses here is identical to that used in Jex-Blake’s first known leader, where she notes that “another lady is

²²⁷ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, June 29, 1869. Leading article, “THREE months ago, we noticed the facts that Miss Garrett Anderson...”

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

now knocking at the gates.” In addition, she makes broad claims for the rights of women as inhabitants of the nation and the duty that comes with power.

Reprinting Articles from Other Sources

Throughout the Edinburgh campaign, the *Scotsman* reprinted articles from other papers that addressed the campaign in a favorable light, and there is evidence that Jex-Blake worked behind the scenes in an editorial capacity to make this happen. Furthermore, while the *Scotsman* was Jex-Blake’s primary platform, it is likely that she was simultaneously writing unsigned leaders and pseudonymous letters to the editor for both the *Daily Review* and the *Glasgow Herald*, as well as other papers, throughout the campaign.²²⁹ In my research I have frequently encountered leaders in both the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Daily Review* that were published within days of Jex-Blake’s leaders in the *Scotsman*, using similar arguments, examples, phrases, and rhetorical strategies. We know that Jex-Blake was close friends with Sarah Kingsley, the wife of the *Daily Review*’s 1870-1871 editor, Henry Kingsley (Charles Kingsley’s brother), so she had a direct personal connection to the paper. Moreover, in her biography of Jex-Blake, Todd includes the following line from Jex-Blake’s diary of March 1869, in which she suggests that she was also writing for the *Daily Review*: “Now, having done all that lies in one woman’s power—except, perhaps, an article in the *Daily Review*.”²³⁰ Thus, it appears that Jex-Blake’s ideas were likely amplified not only through the *Scotsman* but through other anonymous publications as well, and as a result, her influence is much greater than we previously realized.

²²⁹ *The Spectator* is another paper that is quoted a number of times in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. Many of the quoted passages echo Jex-Blake’s *Scotsman* leaders, either because she wrote them herself or because the *Scotsman* influenced the writer. In the future, I would like to search the archives for these additional publications to see whether any record of Jex-Blake’s authorship exists.

²³⁰ Todd, *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 121.

To take one example of many, the week following the publication of the aforementioned leader, the *Scotsman* reprinted in full a short news brief from the *British Medical Journal*.²³¹ The excerpt begins:

An appeal has again been made to the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh by several ladies, praying that it would recommend the University Court to admit women to the matriculation examination for medical students, and to the usual examinations for degrees.²³²

It is worth comparing the language of this piece to that of Jex-Blake's leader of June 29:

[L]ast Friday a second petition was presented to the Senatus Academicus, praying that its members would recommend the University Court to sanction the matriculation of women.²³³

The language of the *British Medical Journal* piece is very similar to the *Scotsman* leader, with the structure of the information the same and the use of the word "praying" utilized in both. To take another example from the same *British Medical Journal* article:

It will be remembered that, seven years ago, Miss Garrett Anderson failed in her application for permission to study in Edinburgh; and that, only a few months ago, Miss Jex-Blake met with a similar repulse at the hands of the University Court. In the latter case, however, a large majority of the Senatus were in favor of

²³¹ *Scotsman*, July 5, 1869, "THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH AND FEMALE MEDICAL STUDENTS." The quoted text comes from *The British Medical Journal*. Vol. 2, No. 444 (Jul. 3, 1869), pp. 15-16 (2 pages).

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, June 29, 1869. Leading article, "THREE months ago, we noticed the facts that Miss Garrett Anderson..."

Miss Blake's admission to the several summer courses; but the cry against the impropriety of mixed classes gained the day."²³⁴

And from the *Scotsman* leader:

[L]arge majorities both in the Medical Faculty and Senatus voted that Miss Jex-Blake should be admitted to the summer classes at least as a tentative measure. But the outcry was revived against the impropriety of 'mixed classes,' and it was ostensibly on this ground alone that the University Court . . . refused its sanction to the proposed measure.²³⁵

Again, the sections are very similar. Both begin by noting that the Senatus was in favor of Jex-Blake's admission to summer courses, and both follow that assertion with a similar phrase about the cry/outcry "against the impropriety of mixed classes." That the wording of this leader is so similar to the wording in the *Scotsman* suggests either that the *British Medical Journal* took its cue from the *Scotsman*, or that Jex-Blake or someone at the *Scotsman* actually submitted the piece there and then had it reprinted in the *Scotsman*'s pages. This interests me primarily as it relates to the *Scotsman* because so many of the excerpts on the campaign from other publications that were re-published in the *Scotsman* echoed earlier *Scotsman* leaders that Jex-Blake wrote. Understanding whether she was using the *Scotsman* to re-circulate her other publications, influencing what others were writing about the *Scotsman*, or, as I believe, a mixture of the two, would be an interesting future project. Either way this example again affirms that Jex-Blake had a wider influence than has previously been known. Phrases and ideas from her *Scotsman* leaders were reprinted in other papers and then circulated in the *Scotsman* via reprinted pieces. As Jex-

²³⁴ *Scotsman*, July 5, 1869. "THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH AND FEMALE MEDICAL STUDENTS." The quoted text comes from *The British Medical Journal*. Vol. 2, No. 444 (Jul. 3, 1869), pp. 15-16 (2 pages).

²³⁵ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, June 29, 1869. Leading article, "THREE months ago, we noticed the facts that Miss Garrett Anderson..."

Blake struggled to gain admission to the University of Edinburgh in the spring and summer 1869, the *Scotsman* published detailed descriptions of her struggle in short news briefs and opinionated leaders.²³⁶

Admission to the University of Edinburgh

As we have seen, when Jex-Blake first applied to the University of Edinburgh in 1869, the University Court initially denied her application, claiming that they could not make a decision “as a temporary arrangement in the interest of one lady.”²³⁷ As she would later explain, the university’s choice of words, which were emphasized in the *Scotsman*, had unintentionally provided a “very palpable invitation to other ladies”; she immediately posted an advertisement in *The Times*, and within months she and four other women jointly renewed the initial application.²³⁸ This time Jex-Blake addressed a letter directly to the Rector of the University and another to the Senatus asking whether they would allow the women to begin their studies if they agreed to be taught in separate classes, given that the opposition to Jex-Blake’s summer course of study had centered on the impropriety of “mixed classes.” On July 1st, the Medical Faculty approved this request and recommended to the Senatus that women be allowed to matriculate and take classes so long as the classes were confined to women only.

²³⁶ For example, readers of the *Scotsman*’s short main page news briefs on Tuesday, April 6, 1869 would have noted the following: “A MEETING of the Edinburgh University Court was held yesterday, which was expected to take up the case of Miss Jex-Blake on an appeal from a decision of the Senatus permitting the lady to attend two of the classes in the University—Botany and Natural History.” This piece announces that Jex-Blake’s case was going to be taken up on an appeal from a decision of the Senatus permitting her to attend Botany and Natural History. However, as the writer notes, the appeal had been delayed to the next meeting on April 6. Such detailed reporting of events related to her campaign would only increase in frequency over time. When the University Court voted against Jex-Blake’s appeal, claiming that they could not make special accommodations for just one lady, the *Scotsman* observed that The Court had rejected Jex-Blake due to “the difficulties at present standing in the way of carrying out the resolution of the Senatus as a temporary arrangement in the interest of one lady.” This in turn attracted the attention of Isabel Thorne, who wrote to Jex-Blake asking to join the cause as a fellow student.

²³⁷ In a less frequently quoted but equally important section, they add: “and not being prepared to adjudicate finally on the question whether women should be educated in the Medical classes of the University” (38).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

During the Autumn of 1869, as the resolution made its way through various university bodies, glimpses of trouble became apparent. A *Scotsman* leader from late October aims to publicize a recent development. The General Council was seeking to prevent women from studying after having admitted them by aiming to block the resolution: “TO refuse a just demand is bad ; but to revoke justice after it has been granted, to repent of fairness, to be sorry for having done well.”²³⁹ Two days after the publication of this leader, a related letter appears on the *Scotsman*’s correspondence pages. The author, signed “FAIR PLAY,” could have been Jex-Blake, as this pseudonym would appear many times during the campaign in letters that employ Jex-Blake’s arguments and phrases from known sources. In this letter Fair Play makes many of the same arguments that Jex-Blake had made in “Medicine as a Profession for Women” and urges all who support to be there to vote. It appears that Jex-Blake used the *Scotsman* leader to inform her audience of the potential problem in the University while simultaneously employing the correspondence page to inspire collective action in the form of voting. The end result was that the resolution was passed by the General Council on October 29th. The following day a celebratory leader appeared in the *Scotsman*. It began: “COMMON sense and justice triumphed yesterday in the Edinburgh University Council, and Dr Phin did not.”²⁴⁰ This piece congratulates the Council on making a good decision while criticizing one of the female students’ opponents - Dr. Phin - directly. The leader also notes that “the public is disposed to give the movement fair play,” echoing Jex-Blake’s pseudonym from the letter.²⁴¹ In that same issue an entire page in the paper provided a seemingly verbatim transcript of the General Council meeting in which nearly four full columns center on “MEDICAL CLASSES FOR LADIES.”²⁴² Meanwhile, the female

²³⁹ *Scotsman* Tuesday, October 26, 1869. Leading article, “TO refuse a just demand is bad ; but to revoke justice after it has been granted...”

²⁴⁰ *Scotsman* Saturday, October 30, 1869. “GENERAL COUNCIL OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY.”

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² *Scotsman* Saturday, October 30, 1869. “GENERAL COUNCIL”

students were admitted on a provisional basis to the preliminary examination for medical students, and they all passed.

The Philadelphia Riot

In the fall of 1869, as the female students completed their examinations and prepared to receive their matriculation tickets, an ominous foreshadowing of their future occurred in the United States. Nearly one year before the famous Surgeons' Hall Riot in November 1870, male medical students protested the admission of women to the Pennsylvania Hospital in the Philadelphia riot of 1869, an event that closely mirrored the Surgeons' Hall riot of 1870 and was reported in the *Scotsman* and other papers throughout Britain. This is particularly interesting when one considers that many would later blame the riot in Edinburgh on Jex-Blake, claiming that her flawed personality and errors in judgment had driven the medical men to their extremely hostile positions, rather than blaming the medical men for their behavior or noting that similar events had occurred in other parts of the world. As I discuss in Chapter 3, many of her contemporaries made these attacks explicit as they wrote the history of the campaign and blamed the events in Edinburgh on Jex-Blake. Events like the Philadelphia Riot indicate that rather than being the fault of any one particular woman, such obstructive tactics were a reflection of the misogyny of the period, a fact that might seem obvious but is by no means accepted by everyone, even today.

On Saturday, December 4, 1869 a leading *Scotsman* article discusses the riot in Philadelphia.²⁴³ This piece makes some of the arguments that would later be made later against

²⁴³ *Scotsman*, Saturday, December 4, 1869. Leading article, "THE recent behavior of some Philadelphian medical students..."

the medical men in Edinburgh. The women had attended the lectures in a “perfectly inoffensive manner,” but their good behavior had not spared them from what was about to happen. Quoting an American newspaper, the writer of the *Scotsman* article describes the scene: “Their conduct during the lecture was of the coarsest description; and after the class was dismissed ‘the students took possession of the walk leading through the yard from the hospital . . . uttering various uncouth noises and indecent comments, and making other manifestations peculiar to this class of *gentlemen*.’”²⁴⁴ The article calls them “vulgar men” and says it is “sufficiently strange that it should not have occurred to the rioters that such conduct as theirs was hardly calculated to prove their fitness for the exclusive medical charge of that sex to whom they did not know how to show common courtesy.”²⁴⁵ This powerful argument – that medical men’s means of opposing the female students clearly illustrated their lack of fitness to care for female patients – recurs again and again throughout the Edinburgh campaign. A few days later the *Scotsman* included a short news brief: “AT a recent meeting of the Philadelphia Medical Society it was resolved to outlaw any member of the profession who should consult with any female physician in the treatment of a case.”²⁴⁶

Edinburgh University’s First Matriculated Female Students

The female students’ triumph seemed official when a new section was published in the Edinburgh University Calendar of 1870 entitled “Regulations for the Education of Women in Medicine in the University.”²⁴⁷ While the regulations noted that the female students would be

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ *Scotsman*, Friday, December 10, 1869. “AT a recent meeting...”

²⁴⁷ The Edinburgh University Calendar, 1870-1, 166.

taught in separate classes and would pay higher fees for those classes because of their smaller size (in fact, they paid as much as four times the fees of the male students that winter), the female students were ecstatic that they were to have the rights and privileges of regularly admitted students. The regulations stated in black and white that female students would be “subject to all the regulations now or at any future time in force in the University.”²⁴⁸ As Jex-Blake would explain in *Medical Women*: “It seemed now as if smooth water had at length been reached, after seven months of almost incessant struggle.”²⁴⁹ While it was noted that faculty members were permitted but not required to teach female students, leaving the women entirely “dependent on the goodwill of the lecturers,” they were reassured by the helpful, welcoming attitude of the lecturers in physiology and chemistry who agreed to conduct separate courses for women in the winter term.²⁵⁰ Jex-Blake was already feeling the strain of her campaign for admission during this early period: “I have had terrible wear and tear to go through the last two months. Edinburgh was very very tiring work,--to repeat endless arguments to an endless succession of people took so very much out of one.”²⁵¹ Jex-Blake’s emphasis on repetition here is particularly important given the fact of her re-circulation of the same arguments and re-publication of the same texts throughout her life. She would often repurpose the same text in different venues or return to recycled arguments both as part of an explicit rhetorical strategy and also to simply get the job done because the sheer scale of her output was enormous. This repurposing is most evident in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*.

A *Scotsman* leader announcing Jex-Blake’s success appeared in the *Scotsman* shortly following this period.²⁵² This piece is much shorter than her previous leaders and has the feel of

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 180.

²⁵⁰ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 90.

²⁵¹ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 150.

²⁵² *Scotsman*, Saturday, July 24, 1869. Leading article, “ON the recommendation...”

closure after a long battle. It announces that upon recommendation of the Medical Faculty and Senatus, the University Court sanctioned the admission of female medical students “on the understanding that they pass the usual examinations, and that separate classes are formed for their instruction . . . Now that ‘a fair field and no favour’ are at length accorded, the real capabilities of women for the study and practice of medicine will be fairly tested.”²⁵³

Interestingly, “A fair field and no favour” is a motto that Jex-Blake is known for; in fact, it was the headline on the University of Edinburgh magazine that featured her image in the spring of 2019 just before the Edinburgh Seven received posthumous degrees. It also aligns with the *Scotsman*’s motto, “reporting the truth without fear or favour.” Lastly, this piece congratulates the University of Edinburgh “on the honour it has secured of leading the van in a great movement, an honour which will be better appreciated when the measure is seen to be fully bearing good fruits, say twenty or thirty years hence, than at present day.”²⁵⁴ As we have seen, Jex-Blake’s previous leaders suggested a future in which Edinburgh would be commended for having supported the female students. The lines above affirm this view. Also, this short piece counters some critics’ later claims that Jex-Blake sought fame through the papers. In fact, once she believed her mission had been accomplished, she was apparently happy to publish a short leader and shift her focus to her studies. University records show that behind the scenes the Senatus was deeply divided; however, they had been cornered by their own language, and upon receiving the application from more than “just one lady,” there was seemingly no path forward but to let this small group of women try and fail on their own.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Senate Hall Friday June 25, 1869. Jex-Blake’s letter is transcribed into the record. It is noted here that there was a “division of the Senatus,” but the motion to let Jex-Blake and the other women begin their studies passed. The medical men were seemingly cornered by their own language.

For the next six months, it seemed as though all of the female students' hopes had been realized. Jex-Blake sums up this period in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*: "We pursued the most interesting courses of study in the University, and found nothing but kindness at the hands of our teachers and courtesy from the male students."²⁵⁶ This happy period did not last long. As spring term ended, a motion to allow the women to attend mixed classes and spare them the significant additional costs of instruction - as much as four times that of the male students - was blocked by Christison and Laycock.²⁵⁷ And then it became known that the female students had not only done well, but that they had surpassed most of the male students. Their success would inspire the first major controversy to dominate the press and bring the female students international attention.

The Hope Scholarship Affair

As the winter term drew to a close, the local papers announced that female students had collectively outperformed the male students. For example, as the *Daily Review* reported, only 23% of the male students appeared on the prize list for Botany while all of the female students did so.²⁵⁸ Worst of all, Edith Pechey had taken third place on the Chemistry prize-list, and as the two men above her on the list had taken the course before, she had actually surpassed all of the other first-year students. The chaos that ensued would prove to be more than Professor of Chemistry Crum Brown had bargained for when he had agreed to teach the female students in a

²⁵⁶ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 79-81.

²⁵⁷ Bonner, Thomas. *To the Ends of the Earth*, 127.

²⁵⁸ *Daily Review*, August 5, 1870. This piece appears as one of many articles in which the success of the female student was publicized as evidence of their potential success as physicians. As the writer notes: "those who wantonly throw obstacles in the way of this gallant little band, incur a proportionately heavy responsibility, as wanting not only in the spirit of chivalry, but even in the love of fair play, which we should be sorry to think wanting in any Briton." It is certainly possible that Jex-Blake was the author of this piece or had some connection to the person who wrote it, as she was intimately connected to the *Daily Review*. She also quotes from this excerpt in a footnote in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*.

separate women-only class, and he was not at all comfortable to find himself at the center of a public controversy. Each year he awarded four Hope Scholarships to the students who achieved the highest scores on the first-term examinations, and there was no precedent for giving the award to a woman. As a compromise he decided to award the Hope Scholarship to a lower ranking male student, a decision that he justified by saying that Pechey had taken a different class despite the fact that he had frequently contradicted this position by stating that the female students were taking the same lectures and the same examinations as the male students. Now Brown was in an awkward position, as he could no longer give the female students the usual certificates of attendance after having claimed that they had not taken the same class as the men. Instead, he gave them credit for attending “a ladies’ class in the University.”²⁵⁹ The female students appealed this decision, claiming that the special certificates were worthless to them since they could not be counted toward graduation, and the Senatus ultimately decided that while the women could receive ordinary certificates for graduation purposes because they had taken the same class, they were unable to receive scholarships because they were not members of the same class. Jex-Blake urged Pechey to emphasize the Senatus’s obvious contradiction in an appeal; meanwhile, she did everything in her power to use the press to win public support and sympathy for Pechey.

The scholarship fiasco generated some publicity and sympathy for Pechey, while alarming members of the medical faculty, many of whom had initially assumed that the female students were likely to fail on their own. As Thomas Bonner explains, revealing some sympathy for Brown, “Newspapers, journals, and politicians alike joined in the attack on the university and

²⁵⁹ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 82.

the hapless professor who had made the award.”²⁶⁰ Even Jex-Blake’s fellow-student Isabel Thorne would later identify the Hope Scholarship as the beginning of their troubles: “This episode was the cause of much unpleasantness and bad feeling, and the probable reason we had so much difficulty in our subsequent connection with the University . . . [O]ur success in the examination lists was our undoing.”²⁶¹

Ironically, Pechey’s personal correspondence in the months leading up to the controversy reflects her belief that a strong academic performance during winter term would help - not hinder - the female students’ cause. In a letter to her aunt written five months before the Hope Scholarship Affair as the women were preparing to begin their studies at the University, Pechey explains that if the female students did well in their studies, they would have a better chance of being fully accepted into the University:

You will be glad to hear that all our class passed the exam which took place last Tuesday and Wednesday, and I believe I may say I did not disgrace the cause -- Our papers I believe were much above the average & we had very good marks in all. Now I think there is less chance of refusing us admittance . . . We have two classes arranged for the first term – Physiology and Chemistry & we mean to do well in both. I am determined there shall be no handle for opposition on that score.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Bonner, Thomas. *To the Ends of the Earth*, 127. In his section on the Hope Scholarship, medical historian Thomas Bonner notes that Pechey was persuaded by Jex-Blake to appeal the decision “against her better judgment.” As I discuss in Chapter 3, I take issue with Bonner’s reliance on George and Frances Hoggan’s account of the Hope Scholarship incident in his otherwise compelling account of the medical women’s campaign. Bonner even goes so far as to agree with the Hoggans that Jex-Blake was to blame for the so-called “failure at Edinburgh,” and many of Jex-Blake’s critics, past and present, have utilized that source despite its problems and inaccuracies.

²⁶¹ Thorne, Isabel. *Sketch of the Foundation and Development of the London School of Medicine for Women*, 7.

²⁶² Edith Pechey to “My Dearest Aunt,” October 23, 1869. Centre for Research Collections.

As she explains in her letter, Pechey was under the impression that one of the reasons given by the medical faculty and others for opposing their admission - namely, that the women could not succeed because they were mentally inferior and weaker than men - could be overcome by hard work and academic success. Looking ahead at the chemistry course that would ultimately cause such problems, it is clear that she was determined to do well because she believed it would help the cause. In this letter Pechey also reflects upon some of the broader implications of women studying medicine, such as a lack of support from within her circle and the stress of dealing with constant opposition. She writes that “it pains me extremely when I find that some of those I love cannot agree with me [about female doctors]” and notes that she never would have done anything that made her stand out and face “much disagreeable opposition” but for her belief that it was “not only the right path, but absolutely the path of duty.”²⁶³ In her view that the pursuit of medicine as a profession for women was “the path of duty,” Pechey was entirely in alignment with Jex-Blake.

It is worth noting that Pechey was at this time Jex-Blake’s housemate at 15 Buccleuch Place, and she lived with Jex-Blake throughout the Edinburgh campaign years. Of all the other female students, Jex-Blake was closest to Pechey, and the two women remained friends throughout their lives. In the letter to her aunt, she describes her impressions of Jex-Blake at this early point in the campaign:

I am living with another student who has a house here – Miss Jex Blake the originator of the movement of whom we owe all; and I assure you it requires no ordinary woman to be the prime mover in a movement like this. She must make

²⁶³ Ibid.

up her mind to bear rudeness & coarseness from many making higher professions of gentility.²⁶⁴

Pechey's high opinion of Jex-Blake was consistently expressed through the end of her life in both public and private correspondence, and serves as a counterweight to many of Jex-Blake's critics, especially when one considers that Pechey knew Jex-Blake better than most if not all the other women students.

Behind the scenes, Pechey and Jex-Blake sent letters of appeal to the University Court.²⁶⁵ Masson spoke in favor of the female students, as he so often would in the years to come, and he seconded Professor Tait's motion that regular certificates of attendance be given to the women. However, at a Special Meeting of the University Court, it became evident that the Hope Scholarship fiasco had quickly transformed Brown from friend to foe. In a complete reversal of his previously supportive position, he voted against the female students.²⁶⁶ As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, Crum would later claim that the primary reason for this reversal was his anger at Jex-Blake for threatening to go to the press if he did not award Pechey the prize she had earned. Being mocked first in the local and later the national press had been enough to not only end his support of female medical students, but to inspire him to actively work against them and use his power to push them from the University.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Senate Hall April 9, 1870. "Appeal by Miss Pechey as to adjudger of Hope Prize" (196-199); "Letter from Miss Jex Blake" (198-200).

²⁶⁶ June 24, 1870. "Special Meeting." The majority of this meeting was consumed by the issue of whether female students should be allowed to take examinations. In fact, the minutes for this meeting reveal that Crum Brown even went so far as to put forth a motion not to admit women. It is unclear whether the female students knew that Brown was their determined enemy at this point, though they might have been informed by Masson, who took the lead in the University Senate. Masson ordered the names of Professors who voted against the women to be recorded and vice versa and submitted a list of "Reasons of Dissent from the resolution of Senatus for rescinding regulations for the medical education of women" (395). In an effort to appeal to the University's self-interest in an approach similar to the one Jex-Blake adopts in many of her leaders, one of the reasons he gives is that "it is undesirable that the University should take a position of antagonism to public opinion on the subject of the General and Medical education of women."

Meanwhile, in the weeks following the riot, the female students made quite an effort to praise Brown, even as they criticized his decision to award Pechey's prize to a lower ranking male student. In one *Scotsman* leader, which was likely written by Jex-Blake, it is noted that Crum had acted "with unusual liberality in refusing to accept from the little band of ladies any but the usual fees" at a time when most of the professors charged them double or more for separate classes.²⁶⁷ This same article notes with Jex-Blake's characteristic wit: "The ladies heard the same lectures and passed the same examinations; and so far all went well. But one of them had the audacity to excel all the men of her year."²⁶⁸ The situation became so intense that Pechey felt compelled to write a signed letter, which was published in the *Scotsman's* correspondence page, in which she attempts to rescue Crum from attacks on his character. Private correspondence at this time suggests that Jex-Blake and Pechey faced pressure to show that they saw their admission to the university as a favor and not to seem "ungrateful," which helps explain why they aimed to temper the effect of demanding the prize with praise for the professor.

During this period it seems likely that Jex-Blake cross-promoted *Scotsman* pieces to bring attention to the Hope Scholarship incident. For example, in early April a brief notice appears in the *Scotsman* explaining that "A 'Lover of Justice' calls attention in *The Times* to the paragraph in the *Scotsman* of the 29th" in which the female students' struggle over the Hope Scholarship is called a "legitimate grievance."²⁶⁹ As the *Scotsman* news brief explains, *The Times* letter from "A Lover of Justice" draws attention to a short article on the Hope Scholarship that was published in the *Scotsman* in which the writer describes Pechey's success and calls the decision not to give her the scholarship "ungracious."²⁷⁰ The *Scotsman* article also notes the

²⁶⁷ *Scotsman*, Friday, April 15, 1870. Leading article, "THERE are probably few persons who did not learn with regret..."

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Scotsman*, Monday, April 4, 1870. "THE HOPE SCHOLARSHIPS."

²⁷⁰ *Scotsman*, March 29, 1870. "THE HOPE SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LADY STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY."

irony of the fact that the Hope Scholarship was originally established by “Dr. Hope, then professor of Chemistry, to a ladies’ class held at the University.”²⁷¹ This point about the ironic nature of the scholarship is one that Jex-Blake emphasizes in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, and it has been picked up and emphasized by most scholars in their narrative of the Hope Scholarship.

Behind the scenes Jex-Blake worked with the hope that Pechey’s appeal would be upheld. One of the ways she effected change was through her relationships with professors’ wives, with whom she often communicated in writing in order to engage the professor in some action or another. In one such example, on April 1st, she writes to Professor Blackie’s wife, Elizabeth Blackie:

I have no doubt that had I been in town I would have come to get your & Professor Blackie’s signatures to the petition of which I enclose a notice. You & the Professor are indignant that as the *Scotsman* says there should be written over the Ladies Chemistry Class Room “All Hope abandon ye who enter here”! – I have been wondering much whether that “I hope that the Professor will be able to be present on Saturday Nov 9th when Miss Pechey’s appeal to be considered – I have great confidence that the Senatus will see at once the justice of our case – as well as its great hardship.” Had I been in town, “I should have come to get your & Professor Blackie’s signatures to the petition of which I enclose a notice – As I am going, I shall venture to beg another of our class, Mrs. Thorne, to call on you for this purpose.”²⁷²

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Sophia Jex-Blake to Elizabeth Blackie. April 1, 1870. National Library of Scotland.

This letter is one of many that Jex-Blake wrote to the wives of professors who supported her cause. Through her intimacy with them, she was able to encourage male professors to attend important meetings where votes would be taken on issues relating to the female students and more. Also, in this letter, Jex-Blake quotes from a humorous *Scotsman* text that she most likely wrote herself, indicating that she was even employing the *Scotsman*'s authority in her personal correspondence.

A barrage of responses were published in the *Scotsman* in the weeks following the denial of the scholarship to Pechey. Some of these letters directly contested the authority of medical men not only by accusing them of aiming to obstruct women from medical practice out of fear for their own professional status on the medical market, as other campaigners for female doctors had done, but by accusing them of fearing that women would best them in competitions for scholarships and other honors as well. One letter in late March by "K.V.C." appears to have been published to satirize the medical faculty's position:

Sir,--The course adopted by Dr Phin when the question of admitting women to the Medical Classes was mooted is now amply vindicated. Only great minds can fully understand what has not yet happened, but we now, all of us, feel the truth of his predictions. "Women," he said, "would snatch the bread from the mouths of poor practitioners." Already they have snatched a Hope Scholarship from us, or rather would have done so, had it not been for the providence of the Senatus, who have defended us in our weakness from the attacks of the weaker sex. So far, Mr Editor, we are safe; but in the future how shall we be able, unassisted and defenceless, to cope with the over-mastering sex in the open field of practice? Let our champion Dr Phin again come to the rescue and save us—unable to save

ourselves—lest similar scholarships and greater honours be snatched from us; and let the Senatus be on their guard, and on any future occasion again secure the emoluments to us and leave the medals to the ladies.²⁷³

While it is unclear who authored this letter, it brings to mind Jex-Blake's 1862 journal entry indicating her recognition that a "reply from a bigoted opponent" could be employed to satirize the stance it ostensibly defended, and it is certainly possible that she wrote the letter herself for this effect. In any case, it is so exaggerated that it was clearly written and published for satirical purposes. K.V.C. emphasizes a charge that was dangerous to the respectability of the male medical practitioner – namely, that the real reason men did not want women to practice medicine was a fear that women would take their jobs away from them. Here the letter writer satirizes the decision to award the Hope Scholarship to the next male student in line by suggesting that men are too cowardly to engage in competition in an "open field of practice" with women and that the Senatus would unfairly aim to protect men by preventing women from competing with them. K.V.C. calls out one of the female students' opponents - Dr. Phin - by name and satirizes his stance by pretending that he actually said women would "snatch the bread from the mouths of poor practitioners." In addition, this piece mocks the masculinity of male practitioners by asserting that they need to be rescued from female competitors.

As part of its attempt to satirize the medical faculty's response to the female students and enhance the public image of the medical community as lacking in masculinity and fearing the female students, the *Scotsman* published an anonymous poem entitled "LINES WRITTEN UPON HEARING THAT MISS MARY EDITH PECHEY HAD GAINED ONE OF THE HIGHEST HOPE SCHOLARSHIPS IN THE CHEMISTRY CLASS." The poem begins:

²⁷³ *Scotsman*, Thursday, March 31, 1870. "WOMEN AND MEDICINE."

“REJOICE, ye dames! In chymick learning’s halls / The beardless rises, and the bearded falls!”²⁷⁴ The writer’s name is listed as “Philoparthenos.” Readers who knew Greek mythology might have read the signature as a playful reference to loved or dear (philo) Princess Parthenos, who leapt into the sea with her sister to escape her angry father and became a virgin goddess.

The *Scotsman*’s attack on the masculinity of the male medical professors only increased when it was announced that Pechey had lost her bid to receive the award. References to the “delicacy” of the professors began to make a regular appearance, as in one news brief announcing the result: “A very odd and very gross injustice appears to have been attempted in the University of Edinburgh. In that University the medical lady students are taught in a separate class—not from any wish of their own, but through the delicacy of the professors.”²⁷⁵ This piece criticizes Brown by name, perhaps reflecting Jex-Blake’s awareness that he had voted against her behind the scenes.

The challenge to Brown is expanded in a leader a few days later that was in all likelihood written by Jex-Blake herself. The leader begins: “THERE are probably few persons who did not learn with regret the decision of.... the Hope Scholarship...”²⁷⁶ With these opening lines she attempts to communicate that there is a community of people who are opposed. She writes: “The ladies heard the same lectures and passed the same examinations; and so far all went well. But one of them had the audacity to excel all the men of her year . . . What makes the matter the more inexplicable and illogical, is that, at the very same meeting it was decided that the ladies

²⁷⁴ *Scotsman*, Saturday, April 9. “TO THE LADY STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY.” Signed “Philoparthenos.”

²⁷⁵ *Scotsman* Monday, April 11, 1870. “THE HOPE SCHOLARSHIPS AND THE LADY STUDENTS.” “Yet Miss Edith Pechey was held by the Professor not to be entitled to the third scholarship, and omitting her name, he included two men whom she had beaten and who stood fourth and fifth in the examination, his excuse being that women are not part of the University class because they are separately taught. Yet Dr C. Brown awards Miss Pechey a bronze medal to which only members of the University class are said to be entitled! . . . To make the women attend a separate class, for which they have to pay, we believe, much higher fees than usual, and then argue that they are out of the pale of competition because they do so, is, indeed, too like the conduct of the captious schoolmaster, who first sent a boy into the corner and then whipped him for not being in his seat.”

²⁷⁶ *Scotsman* Friday, April 15, 1870. Leading article, “THERE are probably few persons who did not learn with regret...”

were entitled to exactly the same certificates of attendance and merit as the other students.” Jex-Blake uses the leader to argue that the decision to refuse the scholarship is illogical. She then makes a logical argument in which she demands equal standards for male and female students:

If women have a claim to medical education at all, they have exactly the same claim as men; if they are to be received as students at all, they must certainly be treated with even-handed justice, and not as social or rather academical pariahs, to whom the bare crumbs of instruction are vouchsafed as a grace and bounty; while all honours and rewards are to be reserved to their male competitors . . . It is useless to urge the advantages of separate classes for women unless the University is prepared to establish them on such a basis as will enable the ladies to obtain instruction as readily, if not as cheaply, as other students. It is not fair to impose on them, in addition to all their ordinary medical work, the toil of canvassing each separate Professor, and meeting all special objection or prejudice, with the possibility, after all, of a flat refusal of the instruction they need. As things now stand, it is clear that our University must either consent to admit women on nearly or quite the same terms as men, and in most instances to the same classes; or she must recede from the position she has gained credit by taking. It is for the graduates of the University to decide which course will be most for the present and future honour of their Alma Mater; and those who think the question important should make a point of being present on Tuesday next.

This was a bold argument, and it suggests that Jex-Blake believed women and men should be able to attend the same classes. She is pushing back against the idea that the female students should be grateful for any “crumbs of instruction” that they obtain and should instead be treated

as students with equal standing in the University. This is not a stance that she took in all of her personal communication. For example, in a letter to Professor Tait the following year, Jex-Blake would respond to his concern that the female students were creating opposition by not asking for instruction “as a favour” and instead demanding it as a right. She writes:

Dear Mr Tait . . . I feel bound to write a note to assure you that we have invariably asked the Professors for instruction ‘as a favour’ -- in fact under existing circumstances we have felt that it is a favour for Professors to give time twice for a second course of lectures at what is at best a comparatively small remuneration. I do not doubt that many of the medical professors use this, or any other, excuse for not lecturing to us, but I trust that you will believe me that they have never had cause to do so – in fact I think we have erred, if at all, the other way in making it too much of a favour, where we really have, as I suppose, some rights as matriculated students.²⁷⁷

In this letter to one of her sympathetic allies, Jex-Blake explains that she is indeed requesting instruction as a favour, revealing that she did not feel as though she could always make the same direct appeal to the female students’ right to equal educational opportunities under her own name. However, even here her true beliefs about this approach are apparent in her assertion that the female students do, after all, have “some rights” as matriculated students.

Toward the end of April the *Scotsman* published a letter from “ONE OF THE FIVE” responding to a recent *Scotsman* letter from “Suum Cuique” that had argued professions should be reserved for men who needed to support themselves and their families. As there were five

²⁷⁷ Sophia Jex-Blake to Professor Tait. December 26, 1871. National Library of Scotland.

female students enrolled at this time, the letter could have been composed by any one of the students. If it was by Jex-Blake, then it is interesting that she aims here not to be fully anonymous nor to be completely known. The letter, entitled “FAIRNESS TO BOTH SEXES” responds to another letter writer who had claimed, much like Jex-Blake’s father did when she asked him for permission to work as a paid mathematical tutor at Queen’s, that women did not need professions the way that men did:

Every one of our little band of five is ‘studying in earnest for a learned profession,’ and ‘with a view to prepare [herself] for the business of life;’ we are all under the same necessity as other students to apply ourselves ‘to a number of different subjects at one and the same time’ . . . All of us look forward to our profession to entitle us ‘to be self-supporting and to maintain’ in whole or in part, those who may be dependent upon us.”²⁷⁸

The writer continues by making an argument by analogy, asking

[W]hether, if foreigners matriculated at a British University, or . . . if Britons went to study on the Continent, the fact that the prizes and scholarships offered were not founded with a special ‘view to aid that class of students,’ would be considered a sufficient reason for depriving them, by the strong hand, of such as they might happen in the course of fair competition to win? If not, how is the case different with regard to another class of students, who, though probably not contemplated by the founders of scholarships, were certainly never excluded by them?”

²⁷⁸ *Scotsman*, Monday, April 18, 1870. “FAIRNESS TO BOTH SEXES” signed “ONE OF THE FIVE.”

The Pechey affair was reported in a variety of publications, and the *Scotsman* frequently reprinted those which were favorable to the women. At one point in April, Sir Titus Salt, the politician, manufacturer, and builder of Salt's Mill, wrote to *The Times* to request funds to compensate Pechey for what he believed to be her loss. Pechey even found it necessary to write her own letter to *The Times*, which was published on April 15th, noting that while she appreciated Salt's support, the actual pecuniary loss to her was "very slight" considering that the scholarship would have only given her free admittance to the Laboratory for six months. As she explains, the real grievance was that the female students had initially been told and believed that they would be "subject to all the regulations now in force in the University as to the matriculation of students," but they now understood that this would only apply "to possible penalties that might be incurred, and not to actual honors which might have been won."²⁷⁹

That same day the *Scotsman* reprinted a recent *Punch* article on Pechey. It begins, "WHATEVER we may think of the ladies' claims to the electoral privileges, there can be no question as to their full right to the spoils of victory when they face our selfish sex in fair fight and beat us."²⁸⁰ The *Punch* piece mentions Brown by name, noting that he "resists on the ground that the lady-students . . . are not 'students' in the sense that entitles them to the money prizes of the University. And yet Miss Peachey [sic] has been awarded one of the five medals given to the five highest students of the session." They write that Titus Salt "very fairly, as it seems to *Punch*, protests against this in *The Times* . . . Bread and salt ought to go together; but in this conflict of opinion between Crum and Salt, Mr Punch votes with Salt. A 'Sweet Miss Peachey'—it is a very pretty name for a girl-graduate with golden hair, and calls up a vision of a cheek like a ripe, melting peach 'the side that's next to the sun'—deserves this reparation at the hands of our brutal

²⁷⁹ *Daily Review*, Thursday, April 21, 1870. "A LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCE."

²⁸⁰ *Scotsman*, Thursday, April 21, 1870, "A WOMAN'S RIGHTS AND WRONGS."

sex; and we shall be glad to see the appeal of Salt followed by a liberal contribution of what Norwich electors call ‘Sugar.’”²⁸¹

Magdalenes and Ungentlemanly Doctors

As the fallout from the Hope Scholarship Affair intensified, the *Scotsman* drew attention to a public statement made by Professor Laycock during a meeting of the General Council of the University. While debating Professor Masson’s motion that the female students be allowed to attend mixed classes, Laycock said that female medical students could be “basely inclined” and that it would be necessary to study their characters to weed out “Magdalenes.” Masson expressed his disappointment in a letter to Jex-Blake shortly after the meeting ended:

People today are consoling me -- for I was really downcast -- by saying the result was a success in its kind, and an omen of final success when the thing comes up again, as it must. All very well; but how shall I console *you*? What are *you* to do this year? . . . [Christison] seems determined to get rid of you, and trusts to effecting this by mere continuance of the present arrangement.²⁸²

It is possible that Jex-Blake learned of Laycock’s comment directly from Masson. In the days that followed the *Scotsman* reprinted a number of excerpts from other publications that supported the women, including one excerpt from *The Times* that lambasts Christison and Laycock by name:

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Todd, *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 110.

Should they educate women, asked Professor Laycock, in “in medical knowledge which they could prosecute when they were basely inclined?” We beg to ask why such a reflection should be applied to women rather than to men? Are there no men who have turned their medical knowledge to base uses? . . . “The ladies,” added the Professor, “now attending the University had come with the purest motives; but how were they to ascertain when a Magdalene came to their classes?”²⁸³

The piece goes on to criticize Christison for admitting that male medical students can sometimes be “a little irregular” and that this was unlikely to improve when ladies of their own age were in class with them. To this *The Times* responds:

We cannot sufficiently express the indignation with which we read such language, and we must say it is the strongest argument against the admission of young ladies to the Edinburgh medical classes that they would attend the lectures of Professors who are capable of talking in this strain.²⁸⁴

This argument that the behavior of Edinburgh medical professors and students was itself an argument for female doctors would continue to gain traction as the campaign continued.

On Monday, May 2, the *Scotsman* reprints another piece, this time from the *Lancet*, that attacks Professor Laycock by name.²⁸⁵ While it is not clear who the author of this piece was, it is significant that it was published in a professional forum, and noteworthy that the *Scotsman* reprinted it for circulation among its own general audience.

²⁸³ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, April 26, 1870, “THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO MEDICAL CLASSES.”

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Scotsman* Monday, May 2, 1870, “PROFESSOR LAYCOCK ON LADY MEDICAL STUDENTS.”

Until last week we were not aware that any one, in the profession or out of it, hold that the mere fact of ladies wishing to be educated in common with men in order that they might make sure of receiving the highest and most thorough scientific training, justified those who held contrary opinions in loading them with abuse and vulgar insult . . . If the coarsest of those few students who still keep alive the bad traditions of the Bob Sawyer period had given utterance to the insinuations which were used by this distinguished professor, we should simply have shrugged our shoulders, and concluded that the delinquent would be at once expelled with ignominy from his school . . . Unfortunately, there are no such punishments for highly placed men like Dr. Laycock, but at the least we can express the deep indignation and disgust which we are certain every gentleman in the profession must feel at the outrage of which he has been guilty.

Obviously, this is a scathing rebuke of Laycock, and the practice of challenging the moral character of both students and highly placed medical professors would only increase as the situation developed over time. The reference to Bob Sawyer, Dickens's manipulative, drunk doctor from *The Pickwick Papers*, appears in a number of *Scotsman* articles, and in Jex-Blake's *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. The fact that this piece appears in the *Lancet*, which was by no means supportive of the women, is significant. It shows that at this point the credibility of the medical men was being called into question even from within the profession, and such critiques had a large impact on public opinion. Under these circumstances, it is rather incredible that that the physicians in Edinburgh not only continued but amplified their attacks against the female students in the years to come.

At times the *Scotsman* published letters and article excerpts that opposed the female students in an attempt to raise support for the cause. For example, while the public was debating Laycock's comment on Magdalenes, the *Scotsman* reprinted a piece from the *Saturday Review* that supported Laycock and Christison.²⁸⁶ While the quoted *Saturday Review* article concedes that what the two men said during the meeting was "extremely unpleasant to read" and they had "perhaps better not have said some things which they did say," it goes on to argue that "in what they said there is a certain amount of truth." They proceed to call the female students' request to study medicine, especially anatomy, an "immodest" and "indecent" demand:

If the ladies and their friends are the first to break the reserve and delicacy with which men have always treated certain subjects, they must, we fear, expect to be treated with a frankness which, under other circumstances, would be simply indecent and unmanly. For example, if they are so very intimate with all that relates to the Contagious Diseases Acts as to challenge us to a full discussion of it, and to go into the matter root and branch . . . they must not make modest faces and whine about being treated with coarse talk and extremely unpleasant and personal arguments. Those who not only play at bowls but invite us to the bowling green must look out for their ankles.²⁸⁷

The threatening tone and insinuations within this piece are clear and received a strong response from the *Scotsman*'s readers. *The Saturday Review*'s reference here to the Contagious Diseases Acts is noteworthy because Jex-Blake and the women of her cohort made a point not to take a strong position against the medical community on these acts, much to the chagrin of activists

²⁸⁶ *Scotsman* Tuesday, May 3, 1870, "AESCULAPIA AT EDINBURGH."

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

who sought to repeal the Acts like Josephine Butler. The British medical women's campaign overlaps with feminist campaigns for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. These Acts "allowed women in certain areas to be designated common prostitutes by the police and made to undergo compulsory medical examinations."²⁸⁸ Refusing to undergo the examinations could lead to imprisonment, while submitting to them could destroy a woman's reputation and in some cases even drive her to prostitution as a result. Although there were exceptions, medical men were largely in favour of the Acts, and medical women seeking to gain access to the profession felt extreme pressure to publicly conform to those views. Catriona Blake writes that "hostility towards male doctors from middle-class women rose to new heights during the campaign against the Acts."²⁸⁹ The language used in feminist campaign literature makes it clear that "they saw the compulsory medical examination of prostitutes as a violation of women's bodily integrity, bordering on assault. They talked of the medical lust of handling and dominating women as a major motive for the examining doctors."²⁹⁰ Kristine Swenson discusses a "larger shift within Victorian culture away from an anxiety over female sexuality, which supported the Contagious Diseases Acts, to an anxiety over male sexuality, which was integral to the rhetoric which opposed them," noting that "from this point, the interests of 'unprotected servants and shop-girls' became central to arguments supporting women physicians."²⁹¹ Such arguments permeated the *Scotsman* during this period.

At the same time that she claimed women's unique fitness for medicine, Jex-Blake deliberately avoided addressing the propriety of male doctors treating female patients, an issue of public concern that had been inflamed by the campaign to repeal the Acts. Like most late

²⁸⁸ Blake, Catriona. *Charge of the Parasols*, 108.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Swenson, *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction*, 95; 89.

nineteenth century female physicians, Jex-Blake and her cohort of women students “felt extreme pressure” to conform to medical positions on the Acts and refused to publicly condemn, or indirectly refer to them by questioning the integrity of male physicians, a position which often put them at odds with nonmedical feminists like Butler.²⁹² Jex-Blake did employ a rhetoric of protection when she talked about medical women’s roles, but rather than claiming to protect women from male physicians, she argued instead that female doctors would protect female patients from themselves. The problem she identified was the innate modesty of female patients, who were, naturally and rightly, too timid to see even the most gentlemanly male doctor; as she explains, these women often waited to seek medical advice until it was too late.

Interestingly, the *Saturday Review* piece attempted to flip the script in a sense by claiming that men, not women, were the ones being victimized. The writer identifies mixed classes as the source of the outrage against men:

[F]emale medical education is quite as much a man’s question as a woman’s. It is an instance of the Unprotected Men’s Rights, which the shrieking sisterhood must permit us to observe will be considered as much from the mere masculine side as their rights, so called, are viewed from the mere feminine side . . . It seems that indecent assaults are not to be confined to one sex; and we must insist on a Society for the Protection of Men if we hear any more of these mixed medical classes.²⁹³

²⁹² Ibid, 92.

²⁹³ *Scotsman* Tuesday, May 3, 1870, “AESCULAPIA AT EDINBURGH.”

This kind of argument in which the author claims that men were the ones being victimized by female students was utilized by a number of the female students' opponents after the Surgeon's Hall Riot.

Against the backdrop of the campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, an increasing number of people questioned whether it was safe and proper to allow men to continue serving as the only medical attendants of women. The *Scotsman* contributed to these debates by consistently describing and publicizing the behavior of the male professors and students who sought to drive the women out of the University. Throughout the Edinburgh campaign, medical men's attempts to block, intimidate, and discredit the female students received near daily coverage in the *Scotsman*. Moreover, Jex-Blake (and occasionally some of the other female students) was able to reach a range of audiences by crafting narratives describing everything from their individual experiences of what we would now call sexual harassment, to their sense of injustice at being denied scholarships; barred from examinations, required classes, and the Royal Infirmary; forced to defend themselves in court; and threatened with physical violence. In doing so, the *Scotsman* was able to counter many of the medical men's claims to sympathy and authority. This tactic would only intensify after the most publicized and overtly violent moment of the campaign: The Surgeon's Hall Riot.

The Surgeons' Hall Riot

Through the summer and early fall of 1870, the female students pursued their educational goals with far less press attention than they had received in the immediate aftermath of the Hope

Scholarship controversy. There was a bit of a stir at a meeting of the General Council in October when Christison protested against a motion that would have enabled women to take some mixed courses by announcing that the Queen herself had privately told him she supported his position on the female students. Christison and his allies won the vote by a narrow 47 to 46 margin. However, it would be a debate over the female students' access to the Royal Infirmary that would inspire the next major controversy.

On Friday, November 18, 1870, a leader addressing this subject was published in the *Scotsman*.²⁹⁴ The piece begins:

Perhaps the most unexpected if not the heaviest blow, and the most unkind if not the greatest discouragement, to the cause of female medical education, has been the resolution of the managers of the Edinburgh Infirmary to exclude women from the clinical classes of those lecturers willing to receive them . . . Practically, the female students have been told, You may be educated here, but only so far as you can be educated without either hearing or seeing. All this looks very like having said Yes, and, not perhaps having meant, but doing No.”²⁹⁵

The leader goes on to make a detailed argument against the objection “against men and women being present together at certain sights and expositions” and the charge that women studying in the Infirmary alongside men was repugnant, which was the reason being given at the time from barring their entry. Jex-Blake goes on to note that in all hospitals, including the Edinburgh Infirmary, nurses are present with male and female patients. No objection is made to this, and as “the female nurses in the Infirmary are in number ten times the proposing number of lady

²⁹⁴ *Scotsman*, Friday, November 18, 1870. Leading article, “Perhaps the most unexpected...”

²⁹⁵ *Scotsman* Friday, November 18, 1870.

students--so the Managers may be said to be daily guilty of ten times the amount of indelicacy which they profess to abjure.”²⁹⁶

The leader appeared on the day of the Surgeons’ Hall Riot. The following day, a Saturday, the *Scotsman* published a short news excerpt explaining that “about 200 young men congregated within the College railings and commenced to shout, hoot, and yell in the most unseemly manner—their option in doing so being avowedly to express their dislike to female students in general and particularly to those with whom they were associated in lecture halls.”²⁹⁷ The writer explains that the men perpetuated a “weak practical joke” by pushing a sheep into the classroom before “singing such favorite college songs as ‘John Brown,’ ‘Hoop la Loo,’ and ‘The Whale’ to prevent the lecturer from being heard. It is followed by a letter to the *Scotsman* from two medical students (Robert Lawson and Thomas W. Parry) who disavowed all connection with the riot. Lawson and Parry had been involved in preparing the petition to the managers of the Infirmary to try and keep the women out, so they wanted to make it clear that they had not engaged in the riot: “We wish it to be distinctly understood that, far from having had any share in originating such a demonstration, we regard the conduct of the medical students concerned in it as absolutely disgraceful, and such as must necessarily expose them to the severest academic and public censure.” The following Monday, the correspondence page was flooded with new letters about the riot, all condemning the male students’ behavior. From this point on the story dominated the pages of the *Scotsman*, and Jex-Blake would take active part in these conversations in both signed and anonymous letters.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ *Scotsman*, Saturday, November 19, 1870. “DEMONSTRATION BY MALE AGAINST FEMALE STUDENTS.”

Much of Jex-Blake's known writing in the *Scotsman* consists of signed responses to specific articles or letters in the *Scotsman*'s lively correspondence section. One signed letter, appearing a few days after the riot, reveals Jex-Blake's interest in maintaining an accurate record of events, as well as her ability to effect subtle changes in the framing of the narrative.²⁹⁸ Responding to an article the *Scotsman* had published the day after the riot, in which they ridiculed the rioters for their "rude, ungentlemanly, and ungallant behavior," Jex-Blake begins: "As an unusually inaccurate account of yesterday's disturbance at Surgeons' Hall appeared in your paper of to-day, I beg you will allow me space for a few corrections."²⁹⁹ In addition to a catalogue of minor details, such as the actual length of time that the women were blocked before passing through the gates to Surgeons' Hall, she notes that in contrast to the *Scotsman*'s report, not *all* of the male students from her class participated in the riot, and she makes a point to differentiate between the students who are gentlemen, and those who are not. I have "no doubt" that "the gentlemen of the class" will "place the origin, cause, and conduct of this discreditable occurrence in the proper light."³⁰⁰ A numbered list follows, in which she notes that in the large crowd, there had only been "some dozen of the lowest class of students at Surgeons' Hall, and a considerably greater number of the same grade from the University"; the rest of the mob, considered of "ordinary street rowdies" and "very silly but harmless persons."³⁰¹ She makes a point to note that the gate was only shut for two minutes before being opened by "an indignant student." She also points out that the *Scotsman* had been in error when it noted that "no demonstration took place, nor could any lecture be heard"; in fact, the lecture was heard, and Dr. Handyside had only noticed two members of his own class among the crowd. She also

²⁹⁸ *Scotsman*, Monday, November 21, 1870. "THE LATE DISTURBANCE AT SURGEONS' HALL" signed "SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

emphasizes that they did not delay their departure at the end of the class. She praises the “courtesy and chivalry of the gentlemen present” who “formed themselves into a bodyguard before and behind us.” With their escort we passed homewards in perfect comfort,” she writes, minimizing the experience.³⁰² In the end she concludes: “I have no doubt that some of the gentlemen of the class will place the origin, cause, and conduct of this discreditable occurrence in the proper light.”³⁰³

In this letter, Jex-Blake distinguishes between two groups of men: the chivalrous, gentlemanly ones that escorted the female students out of the building, with whom she aligns herself and her readers, and the ungentlemanly “rowdies” who did not. She aims to paint the men who supported them as part of the University, and those who rioted as outsiders who brought “disgrace on the whole school.” I am not sure about her desire to minimize the trauma of the riot. The story depicted in the trial and in her book is more disturbing. I think she wanted to rise above this incident and encourage good behavior, painting those who supported them as part of the “in group.” By portraying her readers as in alignment with the “gentlemen” she refers to, she claims her right to be a part of the University environment and affirms the rioters’ “outsider” status.

Jex-Blake was also active on the *Scotsman*’s correspondence page in both signed and pseudonymous letters. One such letter from a writer calling herself “Femina” was published in the *Scotsman* the week after the Surgeons’ Hall Riot on Thursday, November 24th, 1870.

Femina’s letter appears in response to a particularly long letter by a writer identifying himself as “Medicus.” As I mentioned previously, I believe that Femina was one of the pseudonyms used

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

by Jex-Blake during the campaign because it is frequently used in *Scotsman* conversations about the campaign and often makes arguments using her phrases and examples. In this particular case Medicus's sarcastic reference to Jex-Blake as "the chief" was a personal dig that could have provided her with an incentive to reply herself. The letter from Medicus appears to be one of many letters published as part of the *Scotsman*'s intentional strategy to discredit those who opposed female doctors, Medicus argues that the policy of "mixed classes" is "suicidal," and dramatically warns readers what they might expect if universities remain open to both sexes: "[W]e are now merely at the beginning of the end. Strong-minded women will resort here in shoals, crying out for a college education, and choosing according to their fancy the profession by which they are to make their bread . . . [A]nd as for the lawyers, I pity them when the natural volubility of the female tongue gets the academic license!"³⁰⁴

Femina's response to Medicus appears in the *Scotsman* the next day. Turning the tables, Femina flips Medicus's argument against him by thanking him for "the extremely lengthy letter which his 'natural volubility' has dictated."³⁰⁵ After refuting his key points in a numbered list, she concludes that "if in the space of a whole column he can find no arguments but the very old ones . . . [I]t seems pretty certain that the cause he upholds is most surely doomed, and only needs a few more such defenders as he to complete its downfall."³⁰⁶ This example is one of many from the early years of the Edinburgh campaign in which an opponent's letter was published and then ridiculed as part of a deliberate strategy to win support for the female students. The *Scotsman* went on to publish a number of sarcastic replies to Medicus from other writers in the

³⁰⁴ *Scotsman*, Thursday, November 24th, 1870. "FEMALE MEDICAL EDUCATION" signed "MEDICUS."

³⁰⁵ *Scotsman*, Friday, November 25, 1870. "FEMALE MEDICAL EDUCATION" signed "FEMINA."

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

days that followed. These letters were clearly designed to construct a sense of unified community among readers.

Meanwhile, some within the medical community attempted to shift the argument, aligning themselves with Medicus's claims that the well-being of the male students was at stake. This time they approached the issue from a new angle, insisting upon the "delicacy" of the male students and claiming that male patients in the wards would be offended by the presence of female physicians. Nevermind that female nurses were already present in the wards, a fact that the women's supporters were quick to note.

The *Scotsman*'s correspondence page facilitated a robust exchange of ideas on the medical woman question. Throughout the campaign, the struggle between the "lady students" and the "medical clique" was extensively and energetically debated by members of the medical community, the university, the public, and, frequently, the female students themselves. In the week following the riot, the correspondence page was flooded by a barrage of letters from writers who expressed anger and frustration at the medical community. For example, A SUFFERER writes that a "new obstacle that has been thrown in the way of women acquiring a knowledge of the medical profession. The special obstacle at present is, injury to the delicacy of mind of the male students."³⁰⁷ In this letter the writer refutes medical men's claims of delicacy by referring to the rioters' behavior, implying that men who behave as the rioters did are a danger to female patients:

Consider that, though yourselves safe, your daughters may have to trust to the
'delicacy and chivalry' of the men who have just hooted down the seven frail

³⁰⁷ *Scotsman*, Monday, November 21, 1870, "WOMEN AND MALE DOCTORS."

champions of womanhood; and you, brave women, think on the silent thousands who watch, with the sickness of hope deferred, your struggle, and take courage.³⁰⁸

The *Scotsman* also continued to challenge the medical community's attempts to argue that the delicacy of male students was offended by the presence of female students in part by publicizing anything that could be perceived as the bad behavior of male students and professors. In one such thread, the *Scotsman* published a series of letters arguing that professors were responsible for setting a tone in the classroom that had misled the male students. A letter from a medical student identifying himself as "VIR" suggests that the male students' "outrageous conduct" at the riot can be traced back "to the influence of the class-room," where professors had aimed to elicit male students' "mirth and applause, to arouse their jealousy and opposition by directing unmanly innuendoes at the lady students."³⁰⁹ Here the idea that the male students' behavior had been shaped and influenced by their professors was put forward. This emphasis on the negative influence of University leaders would become increasingly important over the coming years.

"The Irrepressible Woman"

The following week some of the worst attacks against the women were printed in two popular conservative weeklies, the *Saturday Review*, and the *Medical Times and Gazette*. The *Saturday Review* had a long history of opposition to medical women dating back to Garrett Anderson's campaign, and Jex-Blake herself had criticized it in her 1869 chapter "Medicine as a Profession for Women." These "gems of literature," as Jex-Blake sarcastically called them, were then reprinted in a circular, signed Edin. MD, which was sent to contributors to the Royal

³⁰⁸ *Scotsman*, Wednesday, November 23, 1870. "THE DOCTORS OF THE FUTURE."

³⁰⁹ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, November 22, 1870. "THE STUDENT RIOTS"

Infirmary “in the hope of prejudicing [their] cause” and encouraging them to vote against allowing the women to enter the Infirmary and obtain clinical instruction.³¹⁰ The final passage of the *Saturday Review* piece (“The Irrepressible Woman”) was generally regarded as the most offensive section of the circular:

The lady aspirants to medicine and surgery desire to rid themselves speedily and effectually of that modesty which nature planted in them . . . We beg to suggest that there are other places besides dissecting rooms and hospitals where these ladies may relieve themselves of the modesty which they find so troublesome. But fathers naturally object to this being done at their sons’ expense.³¹¹

Such an attack on the women’s character had to be addressed, and while Jex-Blake did not respond to the circular directly, she worked behind the scenes to ensure that it was publicized, generating significant outrage from the public. In fact, she employed a similar rhetorical strategy years later in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, where she writes of these “indecent articles” and their impact on the public:

It is truly fortunate that those who are capable of writing brutalities of this sort are generally quite incapable of estimating the effect of them upon the more decent section of society . . . So far as I know the effect [of the articles and circular] was exactly the opposite, for it roused some of the general public for the first time to consider what must be the character and what the motives of those capable of

³¹⁰ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 96.

³¹¹ *The Saturday Review*, November 26, 1870. “The Irrepressible Woman,” pp. 682-3.

circulating such nastiness, and in this way I believe it did us a great deal of good.”³¹²

She also claims that they are “too filthy to quote” while simultaneously providing the reader with the names and dates of the specific publications in which the articles appeared.³¹³ In doing so she is able to use the circulars against her opponents to make her argument while creating distance between herself and the “filthy” circulars.

In the weeks following the distribution of the circular, the *Scotsman* published a series of letters decrying what simply came to be known as “the indecent circular.” Most of these pieces directly attacked the doctors’ motives and moral characters. One such letter, from “HOUSEHOLDER NO. 2,” was printed in the *Scotsman* in late November.³¹⁴ The writer states: “I have scarcely ever met anything so bad, so gratuitously nasty. I have been no supporter of the female doctor movement, chiefly because I doubt of its ever coming to much; but if you can tell me that as a subscriber to the Royal Infirmary, or in any other capacity, I can do anything to neutralize an opposition conducted on the principles of the so-called ‘M.D. Edin. Univ., L.R.S.C.E.,’ I will take some trouble to do so.”³¹⁵ Similar letters from Infirmary contributors and others began to flow in. “A HOUSEHOLDER” writes, “the more public such circulars are made the better, for they will go far to open the eyes of the community to the depth of uncleanness that lies behind these professions of extraordinary delicacy on the part of certain doctors.”³¹⁶ Another letter signed “J” accuses the physicians of blatant self-interest: “Allow me to suggest to the medical men who so disinterestedly oppose the entrance of ladies into their profession, on the

³¹² Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 90.

³¹³ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Ibid.*, 96.

³¹⁴ Jex-Blake, Sophia., *Ibid.*, 97.

³¹⁵ *Scotsman*, December 23, 1870. “THE INDECENT CIRCULAR.”

³¹⁶ *Scotsman*, December 20, 1870. “INDECENT CIRCULARS AGAINST MIXED CLASSES.”

grounds of delicacy, that adopting the chaste goddess as their patron, they should at next Infirmary meeting confess frankly that ‘this our craft is in danger,’ and ‘full of wrath, cry out, saying, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’”³¹⁷

Such charges of immodesty and professional interest damaged the physicians’ standing in the community. Generally speaking, nineteenth-century male doctors, whose claims to professional status were largely dependent upon assertions of their genteel character and material disinterest, did not want “representations of ungentelemanly conduct to circulate in the public domain.”³¹⁸ Knowing this makes it all the more telling that rather than disengage, the medical men were about to resort to even more extreme tactics, ensuring further public scorn.

The Infirmary Meeting of January 1871

At the Infirmary meeting each year, new managers were elected for the Infirmary. As these managers would also determine whether the female students would be allowed to obtain admission to the Royal Infirmary, the meeting of January 1871 was the most packed meeting most residents could recall with several hundred people in attendance. For the first time female contributors, enraged by the recent publicity over the riot and circular, used their right of voting to help grant the female students access to the Royal Infirmary. During the meeting, Jex-Blake and an elderly invalid woman who had appeared to speak in support of medical women, were insulted and pelted with peas by a large group of male medical students. The question the elderly

³¹⁷ *Scotsman*, Thursday, January 5, 1871. “MOTTO FOR MEDICAL PURSUITS.”

³¹⁸ Pusapati, Teja Varma. “Claiming Medicine as a Profession for Women,” 131.

woman had asked was reported in the *Scotsman* and later reprinted in Jex-Blake's *Medical Women*:

If the students studying at present in the Infirmary cannot contemplate with equanimity the presence of ladies as fellow-students, how is it possible that they can possess either the scientific spirit, or the personal purity of mind, which alone would justify their presence in the female wards during the most delicate operations on, and examinations of, female patients?³¹⁹

The woman was promptly pelted with peas by some of the male medical students, who then pelted Jex-Blake as well when she rose to speak. Shortly thereafter, a medical professor appealed to the contributors, asking them to keep ladies out of the wards because of possible objections by male patients: "They were bound to consider the interests of the male students, whose feelings of delicacy, -- because they had feelings of delicacy . . . were violated by the idea of the presence of women."³²⁰ In her account of this moment, Jex-Blake notes, "The pathos of this last appeal was rather spoiled by the roar of laughter that burst forth from the gallery filled with students, as the words were spoken."³²¹ In the days following the meeting, Jex-Blake contributed a signed letter to the *Scotsman*, in which she discusses the speaker's question and replies: "I need not say anything about [the] theories about the students' 'feelings of delicacy,' for the roars of laughter from the north gallery which greeted the very words sufficiently expressed the students' own opinions on that point."³²² This direct attack on the respectability of the male medical community, coming as it did in a signed letter, represents a dramatic shift in Jex-Blake's

³¹⁹ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 113.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

approach and reflects the degree to which she believed that public opinion had shifted in her favor.

One of the most notable things that happened during this meeting was that Jex-Blake had a public disagreement with Christison, a conversation which was reported apparently verbatim in the *Scotsman*. This lengthy conversation, reported to the audience almost immediately after the meeting occurred, reveals Jex-Blake's back-and-forth with Christison and her direct attacks on the medical professors:

Miss Jex-Blake said-- As the question has been made to turn so much on our interest, perhaps I may be allowed to say a few words. What I want the public clearly to realise is, that our exclusion from all the wards of the infirmary is no isolated act--no calm decision of impartial judges to whom circumstances leave no option--but one link in a long chain of actions all emanating from the same quarter, and tending to the same end. When I first came to Edinburgh, nearly two years ago, I made it my business to call on most of the Professors and leading medical men. I was received (with very few exceptions) with the utmost personal courtesy--though, of course, sometimes with disagreement from my own views. But there were exceptions. I called on Professor Laycock. I left his house in perfect agreement with him on one point and one only--that no woman who respected herself had better enter his class-room. (Laughter, and "Order.")

Professor Christison--On the part of my colleague, I appeal to you, my Lord, against any such insinuations against Professor Laycock. ("Chair," "Order," and uproar.) I ask the opinion of Lord Provost on this point.

THE LORD PROVOST--Well, I think Miss Jex-Blake has not made any strong insinuation.

Professor CHRISTISON--Then I bow to your opinion, though I disagree with it.³²³

In this first section of the interaction between Jex-Blake and Christison, we see that the Lord Provost himself supports Jex-Blake and not Christison. Later in the exchange, Jex-Blake makes a long speech, which is quoted in the transcript, in which she provides a narrative of the female students' struggles. She places special emphasis on the support of friends like Simpson, "whose warm-heartedness and large-mindedness made him from the first our warm friend and helper."³²⁴ Then she calls out the medical men by name:

I want to point out that it was certain of these same men who had (so to speak) pledged themselves from the first to defeat our hopes of education and render all our efforts abortive--who, sitting in their places on the Infirmary Board, took advantage of the almost irresponsible power with which they were temporarily invested to thwart and nullify all our efforts.³²⁵

She goes on to note that before the Surgeon's Hall Riot, the male students had been respectful, having "evidently accepted our presence there."³²⁶ However, she claims that some influence seems to have been brought to bear because when it seemed as though the Infirmary managers were leaning toward admitting the female students, she noticed a change in the male students. The transcript of the dialogue continues:

³²³ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, January 3, 1871. "EDINBURGH ROYAL INFIRMARY."

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

Miss JEX-BLAKE: I will not say that the rioters were acting under orders, but neither can I disbelieve what I was told by indignant gentlemen in the medical class--that this disgraceful scene would never have happened, nor would the petition had been got up at the same time, had it not been clearly understood that our opponents needed a weapon at the Infirmary Board. This I do know, that the riot was not wholly or mainly due to the students at Surgeons' Hall. I knew that Dr. Christison's class assistant was one of the leading rioters--(hisses and "Order")--and the foul language he used could only be excused on the supposition that I heard that he was intoxicated. I do not say that Dr. Christison knew of or sanctioned his presence, but I do say that I think he would not have been there had he thought the Doctor would have strongly objected to his presence.

Dr. CHRISTISON: I think the language used regarding my assistant is language that no one is entitled to use as an assembly such as this . . . I am perfectly sure that there is not one gentleman in the whole assembly who would have used such language in regard to an absentee.

Miss JEX-BLAKE: If Dr. Christison prefers...

Dr. CHRISTISON: I wish nothing but that this foul language should end.

THE LORD PROVOST: I do not know what the foul language is. She merely said that in her opinion---

Dr. CHRISTISON: In her opinion, the gentleman was intoxicated.

Miss JEX-BLAKE: I did not say he was intoxicated. I said I was told he was.

The LORD PROVOST: Withdraw the word “intoxicated.”

Miss JEX-BLAKE: I said it was the only excuse for his conduct. If Dr. Christison prefers that I should say he used the language when sober, I will withdraw the other supposition. (Laughter.) I desire only to point out to you that our exclusion was not the result of unanimous judges, striving to do justice to all, but was the work of vehement and bitter partisans, who put every agency in motion to influence those who were not swayed by such indomitable prejudices as themselves . . . I speak on behalf, I say, of this little band of women, who have faced every difficulty, braved almost every form of obloquy to carry out what we honestly believe to be our duty and our mission, and in behalf of that much larger class of women who, in the language of a writer in the *Scotsman* (to me wholly unknown), bids us go bravely forward, thinking, as she says, on “the silent thousands who watch, with the sickness of hope deferred, your struggle, and take courage.” (Applause.)³²⁷

The reporting of this exchange in the *Scotsman* is interesting on a number of levels. First, it is unclear how much of Jex-Blake’s speech was polished after the fact, but she certainly dominates the meeting both in terms of the amount of speaking she does and the audience’s reaction. The Lord Provost takes her side against Christison on two occasions, and she inspires laughter and applause.

Miss Jex-Blake and the College of Surgeons

³²⁷ Ibid.

Two weeks after the Infirmary Meeting, Professor James Simson, Secretary of the College of Surgeons, seems to make an attempt to use the *Scotsman* and other local papers against Jex-Blake. This exchange suggests the medical men were seeking a way to discredit her following the Infirmary Meeting. Simson's letter, which appeared in *Scotsman's* correspondence page, requests "your insertion of the subjoined letter, which I sent to Miss Jex-Blake on the 11th . . . but to which as yet no reply has been received."³²⁸ Below Simpson's letter is the letter he enclosed, from him to Jex-Blake. In it Simson refutes what he refers to as Jex-Blake's claim at the Infirmary meeting that "all-powerful members of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons had resolved to ostracize any man who agreed to give us instruction."³²⁹ The following day Jex-Blake's letter is published in the *Scotsman* along with Simson's most recent reply attached. In his letter Simson accuses Jex-Blake of having "entirely evaded the question" by refusing a response and threatens: "As you decline to verify your words, the Council must leave it to the public to judge whether you were warranted in attributing unworthy motives to honourable members of the Royal College of Surgeons when you cannot substantiate them."³³⁰ Jex-Blake's letter begins by essentially accusing Simson of lying ("You cannot but be aware that in my recent speech I did not refer to any public or overt action of either of the colleges") before refuting his claim that the College of Surgeons was "impartial" and reiterating her original argument: "As I am also unaware that the vote against 'mixed classes' was attended with any proposals for the separate instruction of women, I am compelled to regard the action of the College as simply signifying its desire that women should henceforth be wholly excluded from medical education--a conclusion

³²⁸ *Scotsman*, January 14, 1871. "MISS JEX-BLAKE AND THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS." Signed "JAMES SIMPSON, Hon. Secy."

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ *Scotsman*, January 16, 1871. "MISS JEX-BLAKE AND THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS."

entirely in accordance with the unvarying policy of the all-powerful members of whom I have previously referred.”³³¹

Jex-Blake’s signed letter appears in the *Scotsman* again two days later along with a copy of her latest letter to Simson. Jex-Blake begins: “SIR--I did not suppose it possible that any gentleman would write hostile letters to a lady, publishing the same in the public prints, without her knowledge or consent, and then refuse to forward to the same newspapers her final reply. It seems however, that many things are quite possible to members of the College of Surgeons of which I had no previous conception.”³³² She continues with the explanation that the two “final” letters are enclosed. The first of which is from Simson, and was delivered to her by hand late Wednesday evening. She explains that “through great pressure of business” she had not had time to reply until Friday, and by Saturday morning Simson’s letter to her was already in “all the local papers.” She then “re-wrote” her letter to Simson and forwarded it with a postscript asking that it be inserted into Monday’s papers:

At 7pm on Sunday evening, I received a second letter from him, with an intimation that *it* would be inserted with my own letter Monday. Doubtless the writer had calculated (and rightly) that the . . . lateness of the hour would preclude me from inserting an answer with his letter. On Monday, I forwarded him my second letter, which has just been returned to me with the enclosed note . . . I think no comment necessary on the above facts, and am heartily glad that

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² *Scotsman*, Wednesday, January 18, 1871. “MISS JEX-BLAKE AND THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.”

circumstances should have afforded the public just a glimpse of the courtesy with which certain gentlemen of the medical profession think it fitting to treat ladies.³³³

As this exchange reveals, the correspondence page could be used as a weapon on both sides. Here it appears that Simson attempted to damage Jex-Blake's reputation in the eyes of the public by not only misrepresenting her words but then accusing her of refusing to reply to him after deliberately failing to leave her enough time to send a response. Her reply also shows that at this early point in the campaign, she was willing to publicly accuse medical men of dishonesty and was increasingly willing to make direct, personal attacks.

Within days of the battle with Simson, Jex-Blake published two more lengthy signed letters in the *Scotsman*'s correspondence pages in which she refuted attacks from two of the professors who had spoken strongly against the female students' admission to the Royal Infirmary at the recent meeting. In the first letter Jex-Blake explains that Professor Muirhead was "grossly misinformed, to say the least of it," and states that her purpose is to "lay before the public" the other side.³³⁴ After sarcastically complimenting Professor Muirhead for the "lawyer-like ability with which he told just 'half the truth,'" she proceeds to outline a lengthy response in which she refutes his misrepresentations of her position point-by-point.³³⁵ For example, while Muirhead had publicly asserted that the female students' first application to the Royal Infirmary was "unqualified," Jex-Blake explains that it had never occurred to the female students that they would have to "ask the managers to pass extraordinary rules and regulations" in order to gain admittance.³³⁶ Referring to Muirhead's reference during the meeting to the male students' feelings of delicacy, she writes: "I need not say anything about Professor Muirhead's theories

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ *Scotsman*, January 19, 1871. "PROFESSOR MUIRHEAD AND THE LADY STUDENTS." Signed Sophia Jex-Blake.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

about the students' 'feelings of delicacy,' for the roars of laughter from the north gallery which greeted the very words sufficiently expressed the students' own feelings on that point."³³⁷ Jex-Blake eventually concludes her lengthy letter by apologizing to the *Scotsman*'s editor for taking up so much space and promising to extend her remarks "on Dr. Gillespie's even more remarkable oration" in the following issue.³³⁸

Jex-Blake begins her second letter with a jab at both men when she writes: "It is well for us that the counsels of our enemies are so divided that at the late meeting their two chief representatives founded their opposition to our admission to the Infirmary on two wholly opposite grounds."³³⁹ As she explains, while Muirhead had argued that it would be impossible to set aside even the minimum number of beds for the female students "on the great loss and injury" that would be the result for the male students, Gillespie, "the other champion," then explained to the public that "the difficulty arises not from our asking so much, but from our not needing more."³⁴⁰ She also focuses upon a comment that Gillespie made which had implied that he did not think highly of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's hospital career:

I pass by the silly sneer which he tried to imply by speaking of [Garrett Anderson] as a 'licentiate of the Apothecaries' Company,' in the hope that some present might not be aware that the examinations of the so-called Society of Apothecaries are at least as severe as those of the College of Surgeons, and the license granted at least as honourable. It is probable, however, that he rather missed his mark; for I imagine few people could be ignorant that Dr Elizabeth Garrett, after practising for two years in London with very marked success, passed the most brilliant

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ *Scotsman*, January 20, 1871. "PROFESSOR GILLESPIE AND THE LADY STUDENTS." Signed Sophia Jex-Blake.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

examinations (in the French language) at the great University of Paris, and obtained from it a degree infinitely more distinguished than any possessed by Dr Gillespie himself.³⁴¹

Jex-Blake's emphasis on Garrett Anderson's success here illustrates how important she was as a model and how much her success mattered in the campaign as an argument for the potential success of female doctors. It is noteworthy here that Jex-Blake chose to make these arguments in her own name and that she did not hesitate from using satire and directly affronting these men. This is a marked shift from her previous approach and seems to reflect the degree to which the riot and the female students' obstruction from the Royal Infirmary had altered her approach. Meanwhile, her opponents had become even more determined to remove the female students from the University.

The Defamation Lawsuit, Spring 1871

Soon Jex-Blake found herself at the center of another controversy when she was sued for defamation by the male student who had led the Surgeons' Hall Riot. As depicted in the transcript of her dialogue with Christison, she had publicly accused the student at the Infirmary meeting, despite never having seen his face, and her opponents within the University had decided to seize upon this as a way of silencing and punishing her. The trial, which was again reported verbatim in the *Scotsman*, was widely regarded as unfair due to technicality and a biased judge; the student himself was never questioned, though given that his own professor and numerous students had witnessed his behavior at the riot, almost all contemporary accounts of the

³⁴¹ Ibid.

campaign presented it as a given that he had indeed been the ringleader of the riot. The end result was that the jury had no choice but to award in favor of the plaintiff, though they awarded him only one farthing in damages because the jurors were unaware that the judge, who had been selected by the plaintiff as custom dictated, would saddle Jex-Blake with the enormous court costs. The outcry over the case filled the pages of the *Scotsman*. As Catriona Blake explains: “Contemporary reports gave the distinct impression that the case was conducted so as to arouse hostility toward the women and to damage their standing in the community.”³⁴² However, once again, the intended effect was the opposite. Jurors writing letters to the *Scotsman* complained of the absurdity of the trial, claiming that they had been misled, and most newspaper coverage of the trial raised public interest and sympathy for the women. As a result, a Committee for Securing Complete Medical Education to Women in Edinburgh was formed and quickly acquired over 500 members, including influential people like Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley. Robert Louis Stevenson’s cousin Louisa Stevenson became the Honorary Secretary of the committee. The female students soon received so many donations that Jex-Blake was not only able to pay L1,000 in legal fees but had remaining money to put aside for a future women’s hospital. As she would later explain: “From that time, we were no longer a few isolated women struggling for our own object, but the pioneers of an important movement, strengthened by friends willing to help with money and wise counsel.”³⁴³ From a public relations standpoint, then, the trial left the female students in a better position than when they started. Both the riot and the trial had generated very wide public interest and sympathy for the female students.

In the months preceding the trial, the harassment of the female students had intensified to an extreme degree. As tensions increased, male students began harassing the women in more

³⁴² Blake, Catriona. *The Charge of the Parasols*, 90.

³⁴³ Thorne, Isabel. *Sketch of the Foundation*, 11.

direct ways. A group of them had taken to blocking them in doorways, blowing smoke in their faces, setting fire to their door knobs, destroying their personal belongings, and harassing them in the streets, using medical terminology to disguise their insults from passers-by. The women brought a complaint to the University, who officially determined that they were unable to do anything “because the students were in no way under College control except during class hours.”³⁴⁴ After the trial ended, the female students decided to capitalize on their newfound publicity to put an end to what had become a nearly intolerable state of affairs. Edith Pechey’s letter, which was published on the *Scotsman*’s correspondence page, directly addresses the issue of the women’s street harassment:

I began the study of medicine merely from personal motives; now I am also impelled by the desire to remove women from the care of such young ruffians. I am aware that respectable students will say, and say truly, that these are the dregs of the profession, and that they will never take a high place as respectable practitioners. Such is doubtless the case, but what then? Simply that instead of having the medical charge of ladies with rich husbands and fathers, to whom, from self-interest, they would be respectful, they will have the treatment of unprotected servants and shop-girls. I should be very sorry to see any poor girl under the care (!) of such men as those, for instance, who the other night followed me through the street, using medical terms to make the disgusting purport of their language more intelligible to me. When a man can put his scientific knowledge to such degraded use, it seems to me he cannot sink much lower.”³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 111.

³⁴⁵ *Scotsman*, July 14 1871,

By foregrounding the threatening behavior of the male medical students, Pechey aligned herself with feminists like Josephine Butler who employed a rhetoric of protection from male sexuality in arguments against the Contagious Disease Acts. As Pechey explains, it was not the rich and powerful but rather poor, unprotected women who would be in danger of abuse at the hands of these medical men. This was the same class of women who had been vulnerable to effects of the Acts. From this point forward the female students would continue to walk a fine line by arguing on the one hand that female patients were at risk of harm from some male physicians, while simultaneously asserting that this danger did not extend to the gentlemen of the profession. One practical effect of Pechey's letter was that the police were sufficiently pressured to find and deal with the offenders.

Nuns and Medical Men

In April, 1872, as Jex-Blake was working to publish and promote her first edition of *Medical Women*, she found herself involved what she would later describe as a “newspaper controversy” in a *Scotsman* thread entitled “NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN.” The writer, “J.L. PATERSON, M.D.,” writes to challenge Jex-Blake's claim, which had been mentioned in the *Scotsman*, that nuns in Catholic convents “often died in acute suffering rather than receive needful treatment from a man.”³⁴⁶ Paterson takes it upon himself to attack this paraphrase, explaining that he spent “a quarter century” practicing medicine in Brazil in a town where there were “six large nunneries.”³⁴⁷ Claiming to have treated many of the nuns, he explains:

³⁴⁶ *Scotsman*, April 29, 1872. “NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN” signed “J.L. PATERSON, M.D.”

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

[L]ike all women for any cause herded together without their natural protector, they are necessarily timid, and in consequence not only more liable to, but more apt to exaggerate the importance of, and therefore more ready to consult about, all those anomalous nervous affections constituting so large a proportion of the so-called female diseases . . . Is it to be wondered at, poor things, if they make the most of their confessor and their doctor—the only men they are privileged to see? For I perfectly agree with Miss Jex-Blake and other spinsters, that the more you see of men the less you like them.³⁴⁸

He concludes by noting that those who see marriage as a benefit are subject to a “popular delusion,” and the nuns accepted him even though he was an unmarried Protestant foreigner.³⁴⁹

Jex-Blake’s reply appears in the *Scotsman* a few days later and is signed with her full name. In a clever invitation to other letter writers, she notes that she “must leave it to others to confirm Dr. Paterson’s statement,” as she had not spoken from an “a priori point of view” (as Paterson claimed she had), but had relied “simply on the authority of an experienced Catholic Priest and on the authority of a quotation from St. Alphonsus.”³⁵⁰ As she explains: “It is expressly stated that the view of obedience compels an inmate of the cloister to accept medical attendance at the command of his or her superior, with this very explicit exception, ‘Non videtur tamen virgo aegrotans teneri subire manus medici sel chirugi.’”³⁵¹

In the next letter in this thread, the *Scotsman* publishes a letter from “A CATHOLIC PRIEST,” who notes that he takes “an opposite view of the doctor” and affirms part of Jex-

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ *Scotsman*, May 2, 1872. “NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN” signed “SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE.”

³⁵¹ Ibid.

Blake's claim, noting that many nuns prefer "great suffering, and even sometimes death itself" to medical treatment from male doctors.³⁵² He then goes on to take a jab at Paterson:

Should the *Scotsman* find its way into certain Brazilian convents, I sincerely hope the late patients of Dr. Paterson will appreciate the delicate compliment of their foreign Protestant medico, who in your Monday's issue speaks of their country as 'the most unanimously Roman Catholic country on the face of the globe,' and of themselves as 'women herded together without their natural protector.' If I mistake not, Dr. Paterson will find the Catholics of Great Britain as opposed to his views of Miss Jex-Blake's mission as they certainly will be to his appreciation of Brazil as a model Catholic country, and to his sneering pity for their sisters and daughters in convents.³⁵³

Not content to give up there, Paterson writes again, insisting that nuns see male doctors more frequently than other women.³⁵⁴ Jex-Blake resumes the debate by noting that a letter from that week's *Lancet* contains confirmation in the form of a letter from a medical man who was a medical attendant to a Franciscan convent. This writer had observed that nuns would rather suffer than be examined for certain illnesses a couple of weeks later. She concludes: "I agree, however, with the 'Catholic Priest' who addressed you, in thinking that, if even those Brazilian nuns should one day see Dr Paterson's letter of April 29, they would be furnished with a new motive for wishing henceforth for the medical services of their own sex only."³⁵⁵ After Paterson

³⁵² *Scotsman*, May 4, 1872. "NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN" signed "A CATHOLIC PRIEST."

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Scotsman*, May 8, 1872. "NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN" signed "J.L. Paterson, M.D."

³⁵⁵ *Scotsman*, May 21, 1872. "NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN" signed "SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE."

replies with a rambling and incoherent defense of his position, Jex-Blake responds again, this time directly pointing to the letter-writer's gender and its impact on the reader:

I do not know that it is of much consequence that a large part of his letter is wholly unintelligible to me. Had it been written by a woman, I cannot help fancying that it might have been cited as an instance of "feminine inability to stick to the point"; but it is not worthwhile to spend time in guessing what "unjust aspersions" I am supposed to have cast on the priesthood of Brazil, on which I am innocent of ever having bestowed a thought. I imagine that the writer intends his reference to my "knowledge of Latin" to be particularly cutting, but I confess that it is to me simply meaningless, however much I may regret his professed incapacity to understand the not very abstruse sentence of monkish Latin which I merely quoted verbatim. The *Lancet* seems equally puzzled by the doctor's sneer.³⁵⁶

Two more letters are exchanged, during which the doctor again attacks Jex-Blake's Latin, and she responds by accusing him of "fighting a windmill of his own erection." Perhaps because she knew that the public was not likely to support a woman over a medical man on this particular subject, Jex-Blake refuses to defend her use of the Latin phrase, choosing instead to distance herself from the issue of grammatical Latin altogether. As she puts it: Dr. Paterson can construct "any fancy sentences that he pleases in 'grammatical Latin' or otherwise . . . I am not in the habit of tampering with the original, which it cannot be any business of mine either to criticise or correct"³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ *Scotsman*, May 23, 1872. "NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN" signed "SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE."

³⁵⁷ *Scotsman*, May 25, 1872. "MEDICAL EDUCATION OF WOMEN" signed "SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE."

Following this exchange the *Scotsman*'s correspondence page filled with letters from women. "An ENGLISH MOTHER" asks to be allowed to "bear testimony" about her own preference for "female medical advice": "[A]ccording to my experience, Dr Paterson greatly underestimates the proportion of women who do not consult medical men in these cases."³⁵⁸ "ONE WHO HAS SUFFERED" writes: "I have watched with very deep interest the untiring efforts of Miss Jex-Blake to obtain for herself and others the medical education necessary in order to qualify . . . I think Dr. Paterson would do well to confine his cares to 'Boa Vista,' seeing he has left Brazil to take care of itself, and thus allow Miss Jex-Blake and her little band peace to devise the means whereby they may obtain what she has so nobly fought for, viz.—a complete medical education for the benefit of her own sex and, where not too late, successfully cure the many diseases her sex is heir to."³⁵⁹ A CATHOLIC WIFE AND MOTHER asks: "[H]ow can any man, medical or not, know what agonies of shame and outraged modesty women can and do undergo when submitting to male medical and surgical treatment?"³⁶⁰ AN ENGLISHWOMAN writes: "It is surely time for men to cease to speak of what *women feel* in this matter. It is impossible for them to know what women will never tell them—the unwillingness, the delay, often *too long*, which precedes their stammered request for advice. What women need is that some of their own sex should have the power of qualifying themselves to act as their advisers."³⁶¹ "M.S.B" writes: "I should like to know with whom Dr Paterson is fighting in defence of the priests and nuns of Brazil, since, so far as I can understand the correspondence that has taken place, no one has attacked them but himself . . . [A]s it seems to me that Dr

³⁵⁸ *Scotsman*, May 25, 1872. "AN ENGLISH MOTHER."

³⁵⁹ *Scotsman*, May 25, 1872. Signed "ONE WHO HAS SUFFERED."

³⁶⁰ *Scotsman*, May 27, 1872. Signed "A CATHOLIC WIFE AND MOTHER."

³⁶¹ *Scotsman*, June 6, 1872. "WOMEN AND MALE DOCTORS" signed "AN ENGLISHWOMAN."

Paterson has now taken up the cudgels to fight himself, I will say no more, but heartily exhort him to *lay on*.”³⁶²

Paterson does not let up, continuing his gendered attack on Jex-Blake: “I think she does wisely in retreating under the friendly aegis of the many-headed Minerva so opportunely come to her rescue . . . Has Miss Jex-Blake no friend with a head on his shoulders to whisper in her ear that had the saint written the sentence as she set it down, and we poor sinners were compelled at all hazards—say a loaded pistol at our breasts—to make an attempt to translate it, the only possible approximation to sense we could make of it would be one diametrically opposite to Miss Jex-Blake and her argument?”³⁶³ Here of course Paterson misogynistically represents the female contributors to the *Scotsman*’s correspondence page as a “many-headed Minerva” and mocks Jex-Blake by suggesting that her Latin phrase is incorrect because she has no male friend nearby to “whisper in her ear.”

Eventually the *Scotsman* publishes a second letter from “A CATHOLIC PRIEST,” who weighs in to support Jex-Blake and criticize Paterson. He writes:

I must confess to feeling something akin to pity for the authoress of the terse and masterly lecture which appeared in your paper on April 25, when I find her arguments met only by muddle-headed and coarse sophistry . . . [H]e presumes Miss Jex Blake has misquoted her author and shrewdly surmises the reading is different in the ‘original folio!’ The author is quoted most accurately by Miss Jex Blake, and according to the original edition (which never had the honour of folio

³⁶² *Scotsman*, May 25, 1872. Signed “M.S.B.”

³⁶³ *Scotsman*, May 27, 1872. “NUNS AND MEDICAL MEN” signed “J.S. Paterson, M.D.”

existence), and there is something like dishonesty in this innuendo made by Miss Jex Blake's opponent. And he is only seeking to cast dust in people's eyes.³⁶⁴

Here A Catholic Priest rejects Paterson's interpretation of Jex-Blake's Latin phrase and accuses Paterson of attempting to mislead the public, or "cast dust in people's eyes." It is interesting that the priest's use of his authority to challenge Paterson's honesty and accuse him of deliberately misleading the public is very similar in tone and substance to Jex-Blake's use of the *Scotsman's* authority in her leaders to challenge and critique the medical men who misrepresented her situation and sought to sully her reputation. As a Victorian woman, Jex-Blake did not have access to this kind of authority under her own signature, but she was able to obtain it via her anonymous writing.

Ultimately, the "Nuns and Medical Men" thread concludes after A CATHOLIC PRIEST insists that "St. Alphonsus was accurately quoted . . . by Miss Jex-Blake" and challenges Paterson to donate L10 if the Professor of Latin at the University of Edinburgh disputes the quoted passage.³⁶⁵ Paterson opts to sideline this step and admits defeat, offering to donate the L10 upfront.

On one level this exchange is an example of the way in which the correspondence page in the *Scotsman* could be used to dismantle the argument of an opponent and generate public support. It also reveals the constraints Jex-Blake was subjected to while writing under her own name. Regardless of how logical and witty her responses to Paterson were, he persisted in representing her as illogical and in need of a friend "with a good head on his shoulders." She was subjected to misogynistic insults, and her Latin was attacked in an apparent effort to damage her

³⁶⁴ *Scotsman*, June 13, 1872. "ST ALPHONSUS v. DR PATERSON" signed "A CATHOLIC PRIEST."

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; also, *Scotsman* Monday, June 17, 1872. "DR PATERSON AND ST ALPHONSUS" signed "A CATHOLIC PRIEST."

credibility. Were it not for the Priest appearing and putting the doctor in his place, the conversation could have gone another way. However, because Jex-Blake had the support and friendship of the *Scotsman*'s editor, the power to solicit, suggest, and arrange letters, and the knowledge that anything she wrote in response to the Priest would be printed, she was able to respond to Paterson in a much more powerful way that she would have otherwise. It was not her signed, but rather her anonymous contributions to the *Scotsman* that ultimately enabled her to get the best of Paterson in this exchange. That Jex-Blake backed off of a Latin phrase she likely knew was correct and allowed a reply to emerge from someone with greater cultural authority than herself – in this case, a male priest – suggests that she felt unable to represent herself as an expert in Latin when faced with a challenge from a medical man. Her comment about the “inability to stick to the point” is particularly telling, as it reflects her awareness that the same piece of writing could be perceived in dramatically different ways, depending on whether the signature attached to it was male or female.

Jex-Blake's 1872 Leaders

Based on the surviving *Scotsman* Contributors' Day Book for January 1872-September 1881, we know for certain that Jex-Blake wrote ten anonymous leading editorial articles for the *Scotsman* in 1872.³⁶⁶ These texts would have appeared on the main page directly following advertisements and were written in the *Scotsman*'s collective and presumably male voice. Of these articles, published between January and October (at which time Jex-Blake likely took a break to prepare for her November professional examination), eight explicitly focused on the campaign. In this section, I discuss each of these known leaders in chronological order to provide

³⁶⁶ “Contributors' Day Books,” Jan 1872-Sep 1881. National Library of Scotland Special Collections.

context and illuminate Jex-Blake's strategies and goals. By doing so I do not mean to minimize the importance of her earlier leaders; as I have mentioned previously, there is plenty of evidence to support the claim that she wrote those as well. However, because we do have definitive proof that she authored the pieces in this section, I have opted to pay closer attention to them as models or case studies of her anonymous leaders.

1872 was in many ways the most challenging year of the entire Edinburgh campaign, and as we have seen, that is saying quite a lot considering what the female students experienced between 1869-1871. During this year Jex-Blake took on the leadership role in a hard fought legal battle with the University, which the women triumphantly won in July, only to lose on appeal in October. Also in 1872 Jex-Blake completed her manuscript of the first edition of *Medical Women*, had it published, and began promoting it. She gave two major public lectures on medical women, one of which was attended by both Garrett Anderson and Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell. She composed numerous texts for a variety of newspapers and journals, including the lengthy leaders that are the primary focus of this chapter. And she helped manage and support a younger cohort of female medical students at the University of Edinburgh as they navigated a hostile environment at the University. In the autumn of 1872, at the very period when Jex-Blake was supposed to be preparing for her professional examinations, which she had skipped in 1871 to devote her energy to countering the University's efforts to block new students from taking the matriculation examination, she was likely distracted by the appeal and other University business. She ultimately failed her professional examinations, a fact which delighted her enemies. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, this failure and the fallout that ensued when Jex-Blake publicly accused the examiners of bias two years later (as she pointed out, students' names were written on the back

of the examination papers) continues to be discussed in much modern scholarship, often without the aforementioned context, as an example of Jex-Blake's supposed failure as a leader.

By December 1871 the original group of female students had successfully completed half of the medical curriculum despite great opposition. The annual Infirmary Contributors' Meeting vote would determine the new board of managers that would make the final decision on their fate. At the annual meeting of Infirmary contributors in December 1871, a slate favoring the admission of all medical students, regardless of sex, to the Infirmary wards was elected by a vote of 177 to 168. This would have been a major triumph for the female students after a year of debate and struggle over the issue, but the decision was blocked. Opponents of the female students led by the medical faculty responded by posing a legal challenge to the voting process itself. Specifically, they claimed that it was illegal for representatives of Scottish firms, which had overwhelmingly supported the female students, to vote despite the fact that they had done so for decades. The medical community's legal challenge to firm contributors' right to vote on Infirmary matters resulted in a year-long legal battle during which the women students were blocked from progressing toward their degrees by their inability to receive required clinical training. Jex-Blake would later describe this move and its aftermath in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* as "the most extraordinary part of the story."³⁶⁷

As a result, by the start of 1872 tension between the female students and the medical faculty was at its peak. A poem entitled "The Song of the Neutral," which was published in the *Scotsman* in mid-July, was one of many which attempted to summarize the feeling in Edinburgh

³⁶⁷ Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 125.

at this time. Isabel Thorne would later write that this poem “graphically describe[s] the state of affairs that existed in Edinburgh” at the time.³⁶⁸ It begins:

WHEN can I again invite / Friend of mine / To come and dine, / Without danger
of a fight, / Without danger that the party/ Change its tone from frank and hearty /
To the angry tone of strife / As the theme so quarrel-rife / Croppeth up amidst the
talk / (As weeds crop up across a walk) / Of the doctors and the ladies? / When
Christison resigns his Chair, / And Andrew Wood is with the blest; / When the
doctors cease from troubling, / And the ladies are at rest.³⁶⁹

As the poem illustrates, the battle between “the doctors and the ladies” had had a dramatic impact on Edinburgh society. At this point in time, references to the campaign appeared in nearly every issue of the *Scotsman*. Brief news updates informed the public of each minor detail in the story, referring to key figures by name only, as readers were well aware of the key players by this point. Any meeting related to the subject was reprinted verbatim in the *Scotsman*’s pages. Letters to the editor on the topic appeared with frequency. And if another publication had published something of interest, the odds were very high that an excerpt from it would be reprinted in the *Scotsman* as well. The story truly had dominated the headlines and absorbed the community.

January 10

³⁶⁸ Thorne, Isabel. “Sketch of the Foundation and Development of the London School of Medicine for Women.” Unpublished Manuscript, National Library of Scotland. Thorne guesses that the author of this poem was Robert Wilson, who had been a medical student in Edinburgh. She notes that Wilson had “shown us much sympathy” and that she thought he was also the author of other verses that appeared in the *Scotsman* on the same subject, including “The Barrin’ o’ the Door,” which Jex-Blake re-prints in full in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* (28).

³⁶⁹ *Scotsman*, Friday, January 19, 1872. “THE SONG OF THE NEUTRAL.”

In the days following the Infirmary meeting, the *Scotsman* wasted no time in publicizing and condemning the medical men's behavior. Its correspondence pages filled with a barrage of letters from Infirmary contributors who had mysteriously been removed from the Infirmary Contributors' list and were now unable to vote. Published news briefs and letters revealed that many had been persuaded to sign petitions after having been deliberately misled about what those petitions contained. One letter writer even argues that the doctors were using their access to patients to persuade them to sign a petition against the recent Infirmary vote.³⁷⁰

On January 8th, the University Court announced that while they could not enable the female students to complete their degrees, they would allow them to complete their studies if and only if they "would altogether give up the question of graduation."³⁷¹ In place of degrees, the female students were offered certificates of completion. The medical faculty presented this as a perfectly reasonable solution and represented it as such in a seemingly deliberate attempt to misinform the public, many of whom did not fully understand why it made a difference to the female students to receive certificates rather than degrees.

Jex-Blake's first 1872 *Scotsman* leader of January 10 was written in direct response to this situation. Because Jex-Blake assumed that the public had been misled by the medical community about the certificates of completion, she devotes most of the space in her leader to a detailed explanation as to why certificates of completion are not sufficient. In other words, she uses the leader to counter the male physicians' disinformation campaign and false messaging. She begins:

As it is probable that considerable misconception may exist respecting the scope and effect of the Resolution at which the University Court arrived on Monday last

³⁷⁰ *Scotsman*, January 8, 1872. "THE DOCTORS AND THE LADY STUDENTS" signed "ABOVE BOARD."

³⁷¹ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 136.

. . . it may be well to state explicitly what is the present state of the law respecting the authorized practice of medicine, what the lady medical students need and desire at the hands of the University of which they are matriculated students, and what the members of the University Court have in their wisdom decided to award them.³⁷²

In this opening passage, Jex-Blake not only clearly defines the problem that her piece aims to address (“considerable misconception”) - she also reminds readers that the female students are in fact “matriculated students” at the University, a title that most of her readers would have recognized as one that entitles its bearer to certain privileges. She tells readers that what the female students ask for is not only what they desire, but what they “need.” These things are set up in contrast to what members of the University Court are offering. Her barb “in their wisdom” is an example of a tactic that she frequently employs, which is the use of satire or humor to ridicule the position of the medical men while winning support for her position.

She goes on to provide historical context to her readers, explaining that the Act of 1858 (“An Act to Regulate the Qualifications of Practitioners in Medicine and Surgery”) maintained that only those registered under the Act could be legally recognized as medical practitioners or receive payment for medical care. Further, she notes that the Act defines the qualifications necessary to qualify as a medical practitioner.³⁷³ In painstaking detail and with great clarity, Jex-Blake explains that no one would be able to practice medicine in the United Kingdom unless they had been registered “and that no one can claim registration unless possessing a license or degree from one of the bodies enumerated in the Act.” She also notes that in order to be licensed

³⁷² *Scotsman*, January 10, 1872. Leading article, “As it is probable that considerable misconception may exist...”

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, “Those qualifications being a license to practise from any one of several Medical Colleges and Societies, or a degree in Medicine from any University in the United Kingdom; a discretionary power being also given to the Council to admit graduates of foreign Universities, there being, however, no obligation that they should do so.”

by any of these bodies, “medical students are required to have gone through a certain well defined course of study, under certain specified teachers, before they can be examined for license or degree.”³⁷⁴ Here she aims to make the information she presents accessible to an audience that is unfamiliar with the process of qualifying for medical practice in order to counter the disinformation put forth by the medical community. The University, she argues, admitted the women “to study ‘*for the Profession of Medicine*’” with presumably full knowledge of these laws. Having established that the women in fact need the degrees, and could not do with certificates of completion in their place, she emphasizes several themes that came to dominate many of the leaders of the year.

First, in both subtle and overt ways, she asks the audience to sympathize with the women students, and these appeals to sympathy are, I believe, very important and very powerful. In one such example, she provides a description of the medical profession from the position of someone like the female students who is on the outside and wants to obtain access to the inside: “The medical profession is thus hedged in on all sides, and entrance is absolutely forbidden except by the one portal of registration.”³⁷⁵ Here she subtly puts the reader into the female students’ position. The medical profession is viewed from outside as a protected space that is “hedged in on all sides.” Entrance is forbidden except through the one “portal” which the women must pass through. By describing it in this way, Jex-Blake asks readers to imagine themselves in her position, standing outside the profession and looking for a way in, rather than from the interior position of the male medical professors.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

In a more overt appeal to sympathy, Jex-Blake uses the authoritative voice of the *Scotsman* leader to ask the public to recognize and empathize with the women's plight when she writes of their predicament:

[I]t is difficult to imagine a position of greater hardship than that in which the lady students now find themselves placed. They came to Edinburgh in 1869, trusting implicitly to the good faith of the University, and feeling assured that, if complete arrangements were not made at once, only time was needed to secure all that was necessary. They have since then studied with more than average success, as shown by the prize-lists, and have never in any way incurred the blame of the authorities, though they have more than once suffered from the ill-doing of other students against whom they ought to have been thoroughly protected . . . The delay is in itself a sufficiently real grievance, but it must be remembered that the loss of time is only one element in the question. The ladies are not millionaires, any more than their male fellow-students, and to those of them who look forward to their profession as a means of support, it is a most serious hardship to be compelled to spend month after month in enforced idleness and inevitable expense, because the University postpones their case indefinitely. If such lengthened consideration were to end in any satisfactory solution of the difficulty, one might recommend patience to the sufferers; but if nothing whatever was to be done, it would have been much better to have said so at once than to keep the ladies in suspense for the first half of the session, and to dismiss them at last with a proposal that sounds almost like a bad joke.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

In this passage, Jex-Blake asks readers to empathize with the hardship that the female students face in the University. She appeals to readers' feelings of protectiveness by presenting the female students as trusting victims of a more powerful entity who failed to protect them when it had a duty to do so. As she explains, the female students were blameless. They had trusted authority figures, studied hard, and, unlike some of the male students who had opposed them with violence, had never had any conflict with authorities. Moreover, she emphasizes that the female students have lacked protection from the University authorities. She presents the female students as "trusting implicitly" to the University, conjuring images of a vulnerable and innocent female who put her faith in a stronger entity. In return for their implicit trust and good faith, the University failed to protect them from the "ill-doing" of other students. To add insult to injury, in addition to the physical and emotional danger they were subjected to, the University also placed the female students in a financially vulnerable position. As if that were not enough, they essentially mocked the female students' professional ambitions. Jex-Blake describes the offer to replace degrees with certificates as a "dismissal" that seemed like a "bad joke." As she puts it:

[I]f the ladies will relinquish this object entirely, and will 'be content' to spend years of life and indefinite sums of money in following out some fancy scheme devised by the University, they shall perhaps, at the end of their studies, in consideration of their matriculation, class, and examination, fees, receive a 'certificate of proficiency' ---which will be worth to them exactly, Nothing! It would be hard to find a more striking instance of asking bread, and being given a stone!³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

With these lines she again centers the female students' perspective and experiences by describing the University's proposal as it would have appeared and felt to them.

Another theme that appears in this leader and in other 1872 leaders is Jex-Blake's direct challenge to the notion that degrees belonged only to men. She concludes:

If . . . the requirements are to be the same for students of each sex, it is a manifest injustice and absurdity to reward equal proficiency with a degree in one case and a certificate in another; unless, indeed, the University is prepared, as it logically should be, to guarantee the passing of a new Act of Parliament by which its 'certificates' for women shall be accepted as registrable qualifications, and be indeed considered as but another name for degrees, since these latter are, for some inscrutable reason, to be reserved for men only.³⁷⁸

As she puts it, the female students are being deprived of degrees, which are "for some inscrutable reason, to be reserved for men only." The reason for granting degrees only to men and not to women is "inscrutable" to Jex-Blake, and by presenting it this way, she poses a direct challenge to the larger educational system that only awarded degrees to men.³⁷⁹

Lastly, Jex-Blake directly dismantles the medical professors' professed explanations for their behavior, presenting an alternate explanation that paints them in a negative light. For example, after noting the great expense and expenditure of time and effort the women had invested into their studies, she sarcastically takes what the University Court had described as "practical difficulties" in granting degrees to the women and redefines these so-called difficulties as willful obstruction: "Being, however, met at this point by insuperable practical difficulties (which mean, in plain words, the obdurate determination of certain medical professors to exclude

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

them from further instruction).”³⁸⁰ In this passage Jex-Blake speaks directly to her reader in a parenthetical aside, where she puts her translation of the University’s claim into “plain words.” In essence, she is asking the reader to see the University’s language in a rhetorical context, as messages designed for particular purposes and audiences. As we will see, her strategy of challenging the medical faculty by accusing them of dishonesty and explaining what she saw as the real intentions behind their words and actions would take center stage in her next leader.

January 29

In aiming to contest the authority of medical men, Jex-Blake not only called out flaws in their arguments but also attacked their credibility by arguing that their professed, ostensible motivations conflicted with their real ones. She frequently used her leaders to note discrepancies between the doctors’ real motivations and the way they represented their position to the public. Jex-Blake’s second 1872 leader centers this criticism of the medical professors.³⁸¹ The article begins:

The medical men who, thanks to the Interdict, have for the moment almost undisputed possession of the Infirmary, seem determined to leave no one in doubt as to their aims and objects, and also as to the amount of their devotion to the real interests of the institution, while at the same time they are affording fresh proofs,

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Another *Scotsman* leader on the campaign, which appeared the week prior on January 17, 1872, could have also been composed by Jex-Blake, but since the entry for this date is missing from the Contributors’ Day Book, and also because many of its contents overlap with her known January leaders, I have omitted my discussion of it from this chapter. However, the following passage is worth a read: “Everything was thus made to depend upon who the Managers were to be; the old Managers had practically declared that if ladies were to enter, it must be over the prostrate forms of Mr David Smith and Sir R. Christison’s other lieutenants; they were so resolved for exclusion, that they were prepared for that end to sacrifice themselves, to say nothing of other things possibly even of a higher value.”

day by day, of their claims to be credited with much of the wisdom of the serpent, if not with all the harmlessness of the dove.³⁸²

Here Jex-Blake suggests that the real motives of the medical faculty are different from their professed motives. She presents them as cunning serpents who have “claimed possession” of the Infirmary as if in battle. She directly challenges the medical men’s previous representations of their “aims and objects,” which had included professions of willingness to help the female students as much as possible. She accuses them not only of deceit but of self-interest, suggesting that their true aim is to protect their monopoly of the medical market from what she sarcastically refers to as “the desecration of female invasion.” In making this point, Jex-Blake aligns the *Scotsman*’s readers and the female students into one interest group that is being harmed by the medical men. She argues that these men do not support the “real interests” of the Royal Infirmary, which align with the interests of the community, but rather their own selfish interests. They are the “worst foes” of the Royal Infirmary. In fact, she even suggests that they are willing to cause damage to their nation in their willingness to harm Scotland’s reputation by embroiling its chief hospital in controversy. As I have explained, arguments like these that challenged the reputation and character of male doctors were particularly cutting. She continues:

Once premising that their whole purpose is in opposition to the spirit of the age, and that therefore their defeat is only a matter of time, it must be allowed that they have shown great ingenuity, courage, and perseverance in conducting their hopeless warfare, and that, if we could forget that they are fighting the fight of darkness against light, of monopoly against free trade, of compulsory ignorance

³⁸² *Scotsman*, January 29, 1872. Leading article, “The medical men who, thanks to the Interdict...”

against education, and could equally put aside the memory of certain weapons they have used and certain arguments they have employed, we might award a meed of admiration to the energy with which these men are still fighting for a ‘slowly dying cause’ with a zeal worthy of better.³⁸³

In this passage Jex-Blake clearly aligns the medical women’s campaign with progress. While affirming her original claim that their defeat was “only a matter of time,” she firmly places the medical men on the side that opposes all that is good. The doctors, she writes, are using their considerable powers to fight for darkness, for monopoly, for compulsory ignorance. While she acknowledges their power and their ingenuity, she aims to diminish them by establishing that they are using these powers to fight not only on the wrong side of the battle, but on the inevitably losing side. In this way she condemns the doctors while simultaneously elevating herself above them. She claims that “these tactics will fail,” especially “as public feeling is becoming more and more roused,” again aligning the female students with the reader in an effort to create a counterpublic that supports the campaign and portray the opposing medical men as outsiders.

Throughout the campaign Jex-Blake framed the Edinburgh struggle as a military conflict and employed the rhetoric of warfare, and that is evident in this leader as well. On one side were the female students and their supporters, fighting a divinely sanctioned battle for education, freedom, and inevitable progress. Using collective nouns like “us” and “we” to reflect and generate unity among her readers, Jex-Blake argued again and again that for their own greed and gain, the medical men had drawn the entire community into “their hopeless warfare.”³⁸⁴ She argues that they are failing in their duty as Managers of the Infirmary and “trustees of one of the

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

greatest of our national charities.” She also notes that they have “recklessly hurled the chief hospital of Scotland on the spikes of fierce controversy” and all that “not for any object or purpose connected with its own interests, but solely because, in their resolute defence of their profession against the desecration of female invasion, the Infirmary formed a convenient earthwork behind which to entrench themselves.”³⁸⁵ Here again we see Jex-Blake’s use of sarcasm to satirize the medical men’s position. By referring to the defence of their profession “against the desecration of female invasion,” she employs military language in a satirical exaggerated manner to accuse the medical professors of professional self-interest while also mocking their position as one that has been desecrated by a military-like invasion of females. She calls it a “breach of trust” for them to forget that their purpose as Managers is to “care for the interests of the Infirmary” and instead “fight a battle peculiar to themselves or their profession.”³⁸⁶

Jex-Blake specifically blames a small group of “certain medical professors” (we can assume she refers to Christison, Laycock, Turner, and others) for obstructing the female students’ progress:

It is well known that when the ladies applied for admission to the Infirmary in 1870 a majority of the non-Medical managers, together with a few of their medical colleagues, were in favor of admitting them, and they would have had their tickets in the ordinary course but that here, too, certain medical Professors met them with the same dead front of opposition that had already been presented to them in the University . . . The strongest professional influence was brought to

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ *Scotsman*, January 29, 1872. Leading article, “The medical men who, thanks to the Interdict...”

bear, and at the elections a year ago every medical Manager who had voted for the ladies was compelled either to recant or to leave the Board. But in dealing with the public the “medical phalanx” did not put forth their opposition in the broad way in which it was shown among themselves; they never have dared from first to last to bring forward a motion condemnatory of the medical education of women. They have tried to make out that this was only an incidental question after all; that they themselves were less hostile to it than was supposed; that the strongest measures were unnecessary; and that they might after all be able to do what was wanted for the lady students.³⁸⁷

Here Jex-Blake not only places the blame for the opposition squarely in the shoulders of the medical professors but accuses them of dishonestly in how they represented the situation to the public, again arguing that there is a discrepancy between the doctors’ real motivations and the way they are representing their position to the public. She criticizes their “smooth speeches” and explains that “they never dared . . . to bring forward a motion condemnatory of the medical education of women” as a general issue.³⁸⁸ That is, until the recent election in December of 1871 when the ladies were more successful, with a list of six Managers having been elected by the majority: “Then the scene changed.” When they lost, Jex-Blake explains, “the exclusionists actually took out an interdict to prevent the new Managers from sitting, on the novel pretext that the majority in their favour was obtained by the votes of firms!”³⁸⁹ It was at this moment, she

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid. Jex-Blake explains that the medical men attempted to present the issue of medical women to the public as an “incidental question”; they wanted it to be believed that they were “less hostile” to the female students, and that they wanted to help them. However, in 1871 when the Infirmary contributors’ vote was held, nearly half of those present voted for six Managers favorable to the women students. They lost by a small majority, however, due to the “almost united vote of the medical contributors.” She also notes that when Professor Charteris brought forward a proposal that “the Court of Contributors should strongly represent to the Managers the desirability of admitting women,” his motion was defeated by “a mildly worded resolution to leave the matter to the ‘unbiased decision of the Managers,’ as well as by the “unfortunate division” of the female students’ supporters. She calls these “smooth speeches,” and notes that when the question was actually presented to the Managers, Christison “moved and carried a resolution that the matter should not even be referred to a committee, and so it was quashed for nearly a year.”

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

argues, that the doctors' true motivations became blatantly obvious for the world to see. The following passage, which Jex-Blake herself includes in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, is perhaps her most frequently quoted *Scotsman* passage, though of course credit is always given to the *Scotsman* and not to her. Jex-Blake writes:

It mattered nothing that the firms had voted ever since the Infirmary was founded; that contributors qualified only as members of firms had, as has now been ascertained, sat over and over again on the Board of Management, and on the Committee of Contributors . . . The firms had voted in favor of the ladies, and the firms must go, if, at least, the law would (as it probably will not) bear out the medical men in their reckless endeavor to repel them.³⁹⁰

The medical men, Jex-Blake argues, had done something completely illogical and likely illegal. She jokes that the next proposal on the part of the medical party might be that the Lord Provost of Edinburgh himself be “deposed from the chair that he and his predecessors have filled at all contributors’ meetings since the foundation of the Infirmary.” As she sarcastically notes, “[I]t may be for this notable purpose that Sir Robert Christison and eleven of his henchmen have signed and sent round a circular requesting their friends to be present to-day punctually at the hour,’ ‘as important questions may have to be decided early in the proceedings.’”³⁹¹ Describing “Christison and eleven of his henchmen” as such was an attempt to illustrate not only the power that Christison had over the other men and his leading role as the female students’ opponent but also to attach to them a catchy label that would associate the men with criminal or dishonest behavior. She not only aims to present Christison’s followers as unethical, even evil, but to

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

present Christison himself as the leader, suggesting that the men who follow him are of lower status and power and merely doing his bidding. Thus, this humorous comment was itself a way of calling attention to Christison's leadership role on the opposing side and questioning the ethics of their behavior.

February 8

Faced with increasing public pressure, the University soon decided to take a new approach. Specifically, they called into question their own powers and raised doubts as to whether they had actually possessed the authority in 1869 to formally admit women. In her February 8th leader, Jex-Blake discusses the delayed response of the University Court, its recent ambiguous statement on the female students, and the female students' general predicament. Jex-Blake begins by directly mocking the University's claim that it might have acted beyond its powers when it admitted female students:

Much discussion has lately arisen as to the power of the University to grant degrees to women—and it may be remarked, by the way, that this is perhaps the first time in history that a University has taken the remarkable course of encouraging and spreading doubts of its own powers and privileges.³⁹²

Jex-Blake depicts the University as a gossip who has been “encouraging and spreading doubts” about its own ability to make decisions. While most gossips spread rumors about others, the University's decision to gossip about itself is a signal that something is not quite right here. Jex-Blake discusses herself in a reference to “Miss Jex Blake” and her suggestion that “for the

³⁹² *Scotsman*, February 8, 1872 .Leading article, “THOUGH the latest utterance of the University Court...”

present, the question of graduation might be waved [sic], to be decided subsequently by the proper authorities, if in the meantime some adequate provision could be made to enable the ladies to continue their studies, which have already been totally arrested for a year.” She notes that “In reply to this, Miss Jex Blake is informed that the Court had already offered all that she now asks, and is ready to offer it again.”³⁹³ However, she notes that according to the Resolution of January 8, the University Court only agreed to consider further arrangements with the female students if they agreed to give up degrees and accept certificates of completion instead. As she points out, in the official letter they published the day before, it is not stated “with sufficient directness” whether the University Court still demands that the women students give up their intention to earn degrees, or “whether they agree to Miss Jex Blake’s very different proposal that the question of graduation should remain for the moment in abeyance.” As she reiterates, these certificates had no value to the female students: “Such certificates being, as we have already pointed out, utterly worthless to those who imperatively need, not an honorary testimonial, but a legal qualification to practise.”³⁹⁴ Here Jex-Blake is able to correct a misleading account of the situation, explaining that the University did not agree to allow the women to study while keeping the degree question open; rather they had offered to do so only if the women would accept certificates, which Jex-Blake again describes as something that the female students “imperatively need.” She notes that Christison’s letter does not distinctly state whether the Court “still demand that the ladies should relinquish their claim to degrees, or whether they agree to Miss Jex Blake’s very different proposal that the question of graduation should remain for the moment in abeyance.” Thus, Jex-Blake is also able to use this *Scotsman* leader again to counter

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

disinformation spread by University officials by explaining from an authoritative platform what they are doing and what the actual rules are.

She notes that in the previous Resolution, the Court had stated that the women cannot count more than four extramural courses toward graduation. In the most recent Resolution, however, the Court claims that they are renewing their offer of January 8, “and yet go on to say that they will now make arrangements for the ladies attending extra-mural courses.”³⁹⁵ Here Jex-Blake is able to use her *Scotsman* leader to bring the pressure of publicity to bear on the situation and push the University to provide a clear answer:

Do they or do they not mean that such courses shall be considered as qualifying for graduation, if it is ultimately decided that the University can give degrees to women? Supposing it should eventually be allowed that the University has full powers respecting graduation, does the Court mean that the additional extra-mural classes, now to be taken, shall be counted as qualifying for the M.D.? If this is their intention, how can they guarantee that it shall be so, unless they at once apply for the sanction of the Privy Council, which they last month declared to be essential? If this is not their intention, of what use will the classes be to anyone concerned? . . . It is greatly to be regretted that, in so important a document as that published yesterday, the expressions used should be so ambiguous as to leave the public, and probably the ladies themselves, quite in doubt on this essential point.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

Jex-Blake's understandable personal frustration over the University's ambiguous language is palpable here. She seems to be using the *Scotsman* leader, with its authority and its public platform, to demand answers to her own questions of the University.

Again in this leader, she not only appeals to public sympathy for the female students, whom she describes as “a class of students eminently deserving of sympathy and consideration,” but combines the female students and the public into one interest group:

It is probable that the ladies are anxiously awaiting explanations on such points as those we have suggested, and that, before they can learn exactly what the Court means, and return their final answer to its offers, several more weeks must elapse. Let us trust that the Court will remember that never was the case in which the old motto was more emphatically true—*Bis dat qui cito dat* [he gives twice who gives promptly]; and it is certain that the public in general would hail with most hearty satisfaction the speedy and happy termination of what has almost become in Edinburgh the vexed question of the day.³⁹⁷

Here Jex-Blake tells us that it is “probable” the female students are “anxiously awaiting” explanations on these points, again asking the reader to empathize with their position. Interestingly, this anxiety for an answer - quickly - is likely the impetus for the leader itself. Jex-Blake's use of Latin lends authority to the points she is making. It is worth noting that she does not get challenged or condemned for her use of Latin when people assume that her text was composed by one of the *Scotsman*'s male authors.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

March 25

When it became evident female students were being pushed from the University, they took the only option available to them and sought legal counsel. Jex-Blake's leader of March 25 aims to interpret this move for the *Scotsman*'s readers by placing the blame on the medical men and not on the female students. The article begins:

By dint of a constantly vacillating policy, and with the help of an assiduous dissemination of self-evolved doubts as to their own prerogatives and powers (ostensibly intended as excuse for an inaction which has been anything but masterly), the University Court have at length attained what has long appeared the logical result of their conduct, and have ended by plunging the University into a litigation, alike unnecessary and discreditable.³⁹⁸

Here Jex-Blake again describes the University's actions and then reframes them in a parenthetical aside where she argues that these "self-evolved" doubts were just an excuse for the inaction of the University. As she puts it, the University Court had plunged the University into litigation. As she explicitly argues, they are the ones to blame:

Every one will regret this result. But that every one may clearly apprehend where the blame rests it may be well to recapitulate briefly the main points of the story

³⁹⁸ *Scotsman*, March 25, 1872. Leading article, "By dint of a constantly vacillating policy..."

which has ended in the action now raised against the University of Edinburgh by its matriculated lady students.³⁹⁹

With this first paragraph, Jex-Blake clearly places the blame right on the shoulders of the University Court; she even states that this is where “the blame rests.” Her efforts to use the leaders to assign blame to the University suggest that she wanted to mitigate the possibility that readers would blame the female students for what was about to happen.

In this leader Jex-Blake mentions and criticizes Professor of Chemistry Crum Brown directly, diverging from the conciliatory tone that she employed in her leader directly following the Hope Scholarship Affair two years prior: “We understand, for instance, that the Professor of Chemistry, who delivered to the ladies a course of lectures during the first session, and found five-sixths of them in his prize-lists at the end, has this year not only refused to lecture to their successors, but has also actually refused even to allow his assistant to instruct them in chemical testing.”⁴⁰⁰ This assistant, interestingly enough, was George Hoggan, who was not only present at the Surgeons’ Hall Riot but became something of a nemesis of Jex-Blake’s in the 1880s.⁴⁰¹ She notes that this refusal comes despite the fact that the room allotted to practical chemistry was not used much during winter session, and Hoggan possessed “abundant time and abundant goodwill.” She calls the University’s objections “churlish refusals of instruction” and describes the female students, who “waited month after month hoping for favourable answers, with a patience that must have cost many a sigh, as the whole winter session slipped away in absolute

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ As I will discuss in Chapter 3, it is certainly possible that part of the reason Hoggan became bitter toward Jex-Blake down the road was that his pride may have been hurt by the fact that he was the first known graduate of the University to be rejected as an Intramural Lecturer by his own professor. To have this happen in such a public way after agreeing to teach the female students himself might have impacted his perspective on Jex-Blake.

enforced idleness for the senior students.”⁴⁰² Jex-Blake reminds her readers that the female students went through a significant trial before it was “unanimously decided by the Medical Faculty, Senatus, University Court, and University Council, that “*women shall be admitted to the study of Medicine in the University.*”⁴⁰³ As Jex-Blake notes here, this was not done informally; she makes it very clear that they went through a process, and this was officially and legally sanctioned by everyone in power:

But the minority, who in vain tried to bar the door against the ladies at first, have ever since their entrance persecuted them with a bitterness seldom equaled except by other trades-unionists, and some of those who befriended them in the first instance have hardly stood by them with corresponding stanchness, being . . . overpowered by the weight of professional influence on the other side.⁴⁰⁴

As Jex-Blake observes, the female students lost allies who befriended them in the beginning because the professional influence had been so great on the other side.

In another passage she portrays the University Court as an unfaithful lover, writing: “The University Court dallied with the ladies’ entreaties, saying neither yes nor no, until after the new year had come in, and then giving forth such doubtful utterances as led to still further negotiations and delays.” Appealing to the *Lancet*’s authority once again, she even notes that they “incurred the censure of the *Lancet*,” which was “no advocate of the ladies’ cause,” for their “unworthy defenses and irritating suggestions.”⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² *Scotsman*, March 25, 1872. Leading article, “By dint of a constantly vacillating policy...”

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

As she puts it, “It is clear, then, that nothing remained but to try the legal question, and by the advice of Counsel this has now been done, in the form of an action of declarator raised by those ladies who are matriculated students of medicine, against the Senatus as the teaching and examining body of the University, and against the Chancellor as its official representative in the conferring of degrees.”⁴⁰⁶ She makes it clear that the female students had no other choice and had been advised by Counsel to take legal action against the University. At the end, she returns to the “main public interest of the case,” noting that the campaign was not for the benefit of the female students alone, but rather for the whole community. As she explains:

The main public interest of the case will, however, of course turn on the issues at stake. It will have to be decided whether a University can, with formal solemnity, and with the concurrence of all its component parts, decree the admission of women to study “for the profession of medicine” and then deny them access to those means by which alone they can enter that profession; whether indeed a University is absolved from all duties towards such of its matriculated students as may have the misfortune to be women. It will have to be decided whether any corporate body can make a contract of which all the obligations are on one side, and can exact fees and demand obedience to regulations, without in its turn incurring any responsibility; and can at pleasure finally send empty away those whose presence is inconvenient without any regard to the money and time and labour which they have expended in simple reliance upon its good faith.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

Here Jex-Blake returns to the notion that the University has responsibilities toward all of its matriculated students, even its female students. She again emphasizes that the female students entered the University in “good faith” and reminds readers that they have invested “money and time” into the process as well. The issue at stake was what the University owed to the students. It is worth observing that when she wrote of what the female students were owed, Jex-Blake was directly opposing those who told her to approach the issue of women’s medical education as a favor and not a right. She clearly explains to her readers that the issue to be addressed in court was what the University owed to all of its students, even those with the “misfortune” of having been born female. In her next leader, published after a legal ruling on her case had been established, she returns to these themes.

July 29

The female students won their case in the summer of 1872. Through the end of the summer, Jex-Blake and her supporters did everything in her power to publicize this outcome. Her friends even had Lord Gifford’s notes on the case printed in pamphlet form, and the *Scotsman* printed the trial verbatim and filled its pages with letters and short daily updates, doing everything it possibly could to promote and solidify this victory.

Toward the end of July, Jex-Blake’s leader contextualizing the results was published. Here she aims to frame the court case for the audience. She begins:

LORD GIFFORD’S interlocutor, in the case of the lady students versus the Senatus Academicus, is probably one of the most important and memorable

judgments that has ever been delivered in the Court of Session, involving, as it substantially does, the educational rights of one-half of the nation at large.⁴⁰⁸

Her framing of the judgment aims to elevate it to a high level of importance; she calls it “one of the most important and memorable judgments” and emphasizes that women make up one-half of the nation. While she notes that “the issue actually tied to the present action was not quite so wide,” she makes it clear that broad questions of women’s rights were actually what was on trial and that the issue went beyond the details of this specific case:

The larger question was essentially at stake, since the main (and indeed the only logical) argument on behalf of the defenders was that women were, as such, inherently incapable of either claiming or enjoying the legal status and rights of students: This proposition the Lord Ordinary declares to be wholly untenable, and further affirms the ladies’ absolute title to proceed to graduation in the ordinary course. In a most interesting Note he gives his reasons for these decisions, and declares that “the pursuers are entitled to attend all necessary classes, provided only they can be taught separately. To admit them as students, and yet deny their right to be taught, would be absurd.”⁴⁰⁹

In this leader Jex-Blake is able to not only publicize the ruling, but to emphasize a key point from Lord Gifford’s note in which he actually ridiculed the University’s position by calling it absurd. She quotes more from Gifford’s ruling as follows:

The right to demand graduation is a necessary consequence of the right to study at the University: ordinary medical degrees are not matters of mere favour or of arbitrary discretion . . . The idea that there may be some students who may study,

⁴⁰⁸ *Scotsman*, July 29, 1872. Leading article, “LORD GIFFORD’S interlocutor in the case of the lady students...”

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

and study successfully, but who may not graduate, was never heard of before the present controversy arose.⁴¹⁰

In claiming these rights for the women students, Jex-Blake points out that Lord Gifford seems to indicate that he believes women have always had the right to study at University because nothing in the charters limited admission of women students, and also because Scotch universities were founded on the model of Italian universities, where women had never been excluded. She emphasizes that this right is not a matter of “mere favour,” a view that she had so often been pressured to accept and assert under her signed name. This was what Jex-Blake had been seeking all along. Privately, she collected all the rulings on the trial and had them published in pamphlet form in a further effort to inform the public and win support.

In summarizing his statement on the case, Jex-Blake points out that it had never been necessary for Gifford to “pronounce authoritatively” on the right of women to enter Scotch Universities, since, after all, the women “were distinctly and formally admitted to the University of Edinburgh by the concurrent action of all the authorities . . . and with the cognisance and full consent of the Chancellor, who happens, most fortunately, to be the highest legal authority in Scotland.”⁴¹¹ As she notes, the Lord Ordinary believed this would put an end to the whole case, and “considers that it must ‘absolutely and utterly put an end to the defenders’ contention that the University of Edinburgh is a University for males only.’”⁴¹² She explains that The Lord Ordinary said it was obvious that it was only because doubt had been raised as to whether women could actually demand degrees that the necessary arrangements had not been made long ago. She quotes from his statement again: “[H]is earnest hope and belief that the judgment in the present

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

action will terminate the unfortunate controversy which has raised so long.” She then effectively aims to present the public, the female students, and Lord Gifford as a united group when she claims that Lord Gifford’s judgment is just an echo of the community’s judgment: “He thus gives with judicial authority a decision which is little more than the echo of the daily increasing conviction of the community.”⁴¹³

In her summary of events, she satirically notes that “an idea seems gradually to have grown up that perhaps the ladies were not, after all, legally entitled to the advantages which it was somewhat inconvenient to afford them.” She also writes that the year before, an opinion was given that the women had no rights at all, and it was because of this that the Senatus had decided the year prior (by a majority of just one person) not to allow the women to complete their curriculum of study.

Toward the end of the article Jex-Blake admits that there are still some unanswered questions, mostly because the ruling did not compel the University to do the right thing. She explains that since the action of Declarator was brought against the Senatus and Chancellor only, the Judge had been forced to assume that the women were not complaining about other authorities of the university. In order to force the medical faculty to teach the female students and allow them to progress toward degrees, they would have to bring another judgment against the component bodies of the university, but she argues that it is obvious what the result would be. Despite her professed confidence in a positive outcome, it appears as though Jex-Blake had doubts about what the medical faculty would do next. Thus, one of her goals in this leader was to make them accountable to the public by explaining as clearly as possible that there were

⁴¹³ Ibid.

absolutely no legal barriers preventing the female students from completing their degrees and that the “right thing” at this point would be to allow them to continue their studies:

None of the University authorities have ever expressed any unwillingness to grant to the ladies all that they felt themselves entitled to bestow, although they hesitated (needlessly, as it now appears) to venture on measures which might possibly be beyond their power . . . Now that this uncertainty is set at rest by a judgment which has evidently been so carefully considered, and the grounds of which are so elaborately explained, the public, having been given to understand that legal difficulties alone have hitherto tied the hands of the University authorities, will eagerly await their prompt and cordial action on behalf of the ladies, whose studies have already been so lamentably, and, as it now appears, so illegally, delayed.⁴¹⁴

Unfortunately, this leader did not have the intended effect. The female students would barely have a month to celebrate this victory before learning that the University had decided to challenge it by lodging an appeal on behalf of the Senatus. For Jex-Blake this was particularly unsettling, as she had given up her spot in the 1871 examinations to support Miller and other new students. Her professional examinations were scheduled for November, and she had planned to spend the fall preparing for them. Now the legal battle had been renewed, and it would demand time and energy that she could not spare.

September 3

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

The exhaustion and disappointment of the writer is palpable in this leader. In the piece, Jex-Blake speaks directly to well-intentioned people who may have supported the medical men before the summer court ruling:

IT is possible that, up to the date of Lord Gifford's decision in favour of the lady students, a certain section of the public may have thought the University justified in withholding from women the means of a complete medical education . . . though most even of those who held this view must have regretted the painful necessity, if such it was, that compelled one of our chief educational bodies thus to distinguish itself by withholding instruction from a class of very zealous students, against whom no disqualification but that of sex could be urged.⁴¹⁵

She says it is probable, though, that "the last vestige of such sympathy on the part of the general public will now vanish" when they come to understand that "the University, instead of acting as its Parliamentary representative predicted, intends to force these poor ladies into still further litigation, and to refuse to accept the Lord Ordinary's emphatic decision respecting their absolute claim to all the rights of studentship."⁴¹⁶ She notes that most honest people believe a contract is to be upheld once entered into, yet some really did believe that the University just didn't know whether it had the right to allow the women to graduate, and hoped the legal question would be resolved by the courts: "[S]till the charitably minded were ready to believe that the action, or rather inaction, of the University did really proceed from conscientious scruples," and that it was regrettable but necessary for the female students to be forced into a lawsuit.⁴¹⁷ However, she notes that after the Lord Ordinary pronounced his judgment, "Every reader of the interlocutor

⁴¹⁵ *Scotsman*, September 3, 1872. Leading article, "IT is possible that..."

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

must have appreciated the lucid and convincing note by which it was accompanied, which showed clearly, even to the most unlearned eye, the great strength and validity of the ladies' case." She aims to bolster Lord Gifford's authority by referring to him as "second to none on the Scotch bench."⁴¹⁸

Here Jex-Blake returns to her argument that the University - this time the Senatus - is harming the community and the University. She notes that the Senatus is "recklessly wasting College funds in discreditable litigation," and laments that

[I]t must be a matter of deep regret to every Scotchman, unblinded by party feeling or trades-union jealousy, to see the chief seat of learning in our land become notorious throughout civilization . . . for the dogged pertinacity with which she pushes her claim through one law court after another, in the pitiful hope of vindicating her title to sit like a churlish Cerberus at her own portal, to drive therefrom one class at least of most earnest and most deserving students, who have, moreover, in an unusual degree, the sympathy and good wishes of the public at large.⁴¹⁹

In this leader Jex-Blake returns to some of her recurring themes. She implies that the medical men are acting based on professional interests and the fear of competition when she mentions "trades-union jealousy." She describes the damage to the University's reputation. And she appeals to readers' sympathy for the female students, this time explicitly writing that they possess the public's sympathy "in an unusual degree." The female students, then, are aligned with the community, and the medical men are positioned as opponents not only of that community but of the nation itself. She continues in this vein in her next leader. Given the date

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

of its publication, it is obvious that she wrote it while she was supposed to be studying for her professional examination!

October 25

In this leader Jex-Blake again portrays the medical men as the troublemakers when she writes: “IT seems that, unless the strong hand of the law intervenes to save us, we are doomed to another winter of squabbling, fighting, and trickery, before the lady students are allowed peaceably to complete their medical studies in Edinburgh,—for that they will ultimately achieve their end no reasonable man now doubts.”⁴²⁰ It is interesting to think about who the “we” is here. The notion that their opponents are bringing the female students and the entire community of Edinburgh into this unpleasant controversy again places the blame on them, rather than on the women, which is how their opponents would have wanted to present it. As she has so many times before, Jex-Blake affirms that the female students will ultimately succeed.

Jex-Blake returns to a rhetoric of war here, aligning her position with “counsels of peace” and contrasting it with “the medical clique [who] have apparently thought the matter over and determined to ‘stand back to back and fight it to the last.’” She says that the first “war note was sounded by the University Court, when, a few days ago, they rejected with scanty courtesy the request that they would recognise as an extramural lecturer on Anatomy a gentleman who had already taught the lady students for a whole session under Dr. Handyside’s auspices, and who now desired to form them a completely separate class.” As she puts it: “It was Cromwell himself

⁴²⁰ *Scotsman*, October 25, 1872. Leading article, “IT seems that, unless the strong hand of the law intervenes...”

who said that a persistent defence of an untenable post was a military offence that deserved hanging. When will the medical trades-unionists come to see their own policy in the same light, and cease these wearisome and exhausting hostilities, which can never, after all, alter in the slightest degree the already certain issue of the conflict?”⁴²¹

She explains the Hoggan connection in more detail now, explaining that the female students had gone to a great deal of trouble and expense to form a separate class of Anatomy, which Hoggan had agreed to teach: “To most unprofessional minds no arrangement could seem better or more suitable, and probably Mr. Hoggan felt that he rather deserved the gratitude of the University for stepping forward thus to extricate it, in one respect at least, out of its present dilemma.” Instead of receiving help and thanks, however, Hoggan received a “curt refusal.” This, despite what she calls the “notorious” fact that the University Court hardly ever refused recognition “to any respectable medical man who has fitted himself to lecture on a special subject.”⁴²² She continues by explaining that after Hoggan presented his qualifications to the University, he was told that there was “no evidence” of said qualifications despite the fact that he had received two diplomas from the University of Edinburgh. The University also stated that although his diploma stated his right to teach, they were surprised it actually meant that he had the right to teach. She notes that the public may be interested in inquiring about a case where a University “sees fit to disclaim all meaning whatever in the words whereby its graduates are granted the ‘fullest power to *teach* all branches of medicine throughout the nations.’” She then notes that if this is the case, perhaps the public might want to ask whether “it seems time to ask whether the right to practise medicine, simultaneously conferred in the same document, is

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

equally meaningless and invalid.”⁴²³ She goes on: “[N]o one will doubt that it is at least as serious a matter to entrust a young man with what is practically power of life and death over hundreds of patients, as to permit him to teach a handful of students the principles of one branch only of medical science.” As I have mentioned previously, it is worth considering how these events might have shaped Hoggan’s later stance on the campaign, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 3. I wonder if this is part of what angered Hoggan about Jex-Blake, whether he suspected that she had written or influenced the article, and how he felt about lines like, “the Court prefers to blight a man’s prospects by assuming him to be incompetent, rather than provide means to prove his competency.”⁴²⁴ While I do not have answers to these questions, I find them intriguing and would be interested in taking a deeper look at Hoggan’s surviving papers for clues in the future.

December 2

The last leader of 1872 did not appear in the Contributors’ Log at all, so it cannot be confirmed as Jex-Blake’s the way the other leaders in this chapter can. However, I believe it is logical to assume that Jex-Blake wrote it considering that all of the other leaders on the subject of the campaign that appeared in the Contributors’ Day Book that year were written by her, and there is no entry for this leader. Here Jex-Blake describes an event that added insult to injury: The University somewhat dramatically and publicly announced that all women were welcome to sit in on classes, so long as they were not medical students.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

As Jex-Blake explains in the leader, at a recent meeting of the Edinburgh Ladies' Educational Association, Professor Christison and Principal Grant announced that all University courses of study except medicine would be opened to women, though not for the purposes of receiving degrees. As she explains, after Grant made the initial announcement, Christison rose to speak: "Then up rises Sir Robert Christison himself, and, with an air of authority and of anything but austerity, bids women 'welcome to all the education which the University can give.'"⁴²⁵ However, she points out that there are exceptions: "What a strange and unlucky accident that almost all our professors should have time for ladies' classes except the Medical ones!" Moreover, as women were not invited to study for degrees or to take courses that would prepare them to participate in professions, she argues that the entire scheme is problematic. As she notes, only rich men can afford to take courses only for personal enrichment:

Sir Alexander Grant and Sir Robert Christison issue an invitation to women which they know would never be accepted by men. The compliment is too high, and empty. Those few women are to be envied who can accept it, and those to be commended who do; but for the bulk of women who are of the same social classes as the bulk of the male students, the compliment, though placing them morally far above their brothers, places them materially lower, and in fact sinks them out of sight.⁴²⁶

In other words, Jex-Blake argues that this is an attempt at erasure. Again, she puts forward the argument that women should be afforded equal opportunities to men and allowed to pursue an education for the purpose of participating in a profession. This dates back to the debates she had with her father as a young girl when she told him that simply volunteering as a tutor was not

⁴²⁵ *Scotsman*, December 2, 1872. Leading article, "Several questions might be held as raised..."

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

going to satisfy her and that she had the same right to work for a salary and support herself as any man.

Looking Ahead

After the female students were denied medical degrees and forcefully removed from the University of Edinburgh in 1873, Jex-Blake moved to London, where she remained at the center of the campaign. In 1876 the Enabling Bill was passed, enabling but not requiring universities to examine women. Jex-Blake was able to take her professional examination and qualify as a medical doctor in 1876. She ultimately made the decision to return to Edinburgh, where she started her own practice, opened a women's hospital, and launched her own medical school. During this period the struggle for authority and Jex-Blake's preoccupation with the historical record would take center stage, as I explain in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Sophia Jex-Blake in Context: Anonymous Self-citation and Prospective History

If I have succeeded in rousing some interest in the question, and in giving a fairly connected history of its progress, I shall be only too glad if this little volume may be the means of drawing attention to the much larger stores of information to which I have constantly referred.

-- Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* (1886)

As I have established in previous chapters, Jex-Blake extensively cited her own *Scotsman* leaders and other *Scotsman* letters in *Medical Women* while concealing the fact of her authorship and editorial contributions. Throughout her first-person narrative account of the medical women's campaign, she employs a practice of anonymous self-citation, including excerpts from and references to the *Scotsman* in extensive footnotes and endnotes, as well as the narrative itself, as an intentional rhetorical strategy to increase her credibility and amplify her message. In fact, approximately half of the footnotes in her narrative account of the campaign are from the *Scotsman*, in addition to the majority of the endnotes. Jex-Blake's extensive use of the *Scotsman* in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* must be understood in context as a part of her larger aim to direct future historians to the kinds of texts that would reproduce her version of the campaign. A number of Jex-Blake's contemporaries blamed her, rather than the medical men who opposed her, for events in Edinburgh, and competing narratives of the campaign were in existence during Jex-Blake's lifetime. As I will explain, it is clear that she had these narratives in mind when she updated and significantly expanded the 1886 edition of *Medical Women*. As she herself puts it, if the book served as a means of drawing attention to the "much larger stores of information" to which she had "constantly referred," it would have achieved its intended purpose.⁴²⁷ Indeed I believe that Jex-Blake's primary aim in revising and publishing the *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* was to direct readers to these texts. She is primarily addressing

⁴²⁷ Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 252.

herself to future readers; in particular, she directly speaks to and guides future historians. As the majority of the texts she chose to cite are from the *Scotsman*, it is fair to say that one of Jex-Blake's key goals in producing a revised and expanded version of *Medical Women* was to direct these future historians to the *Scotsman*. It was in this popular daily newspaper that Jex-Blake herself had "duly chronicled" and preserved a detailed record of her version of the Edinburgh campaign.⁴²⁸

Throughout *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Jex-Blake employs a strategy of anonymous self-citation to create and control her own narrative in spite of fierce opposition in much the same way that she utilized the *Scotsman*'s convention of anonymous authorship to win public support during the campaign itself. Specifically, she employs the implicitly male voice that she utilized in her *Scotsman* leaders and appeals to them for authority throughout *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. While many women writers utilized frames and references to male writers in an appeal for authority during this period, one of the things that makes Jex-Blake's case distinctive is that the voice of authority that she appeals to is actually her own creation. She deliberately presents her *Scotsman* contributions as sources of authority, referring to and praising Alexander Russel to imply that it was he or a male member of his staff who wrote her articles. In doing so she manipulates the conventions of anonymity in print culture to create a seemingly unique and powerful method for elevating the authority of her own work. It is in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, where she uses her *Scotsman* articles to support her narrative of the campaign while directing future historians to do the same, that she functions most explicitly as a historian.

⁴²⁸ Todd, Margaret, *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 154. Todd writes that "The results of the campaign, duly chronicled in the *Scotsman*, filtered through into other papers, and a certain amount of public interest was the result." While it is unclear whether this was intentional, it is interesting to note that at an earlier point in the text, Todd writes: "S.J-B was a born chronicler" (9).

In this chapter, I draw upon previously unpublished archival sources to explain how a chapter by George and Frances Hoggan in 1884 helped to prompt Jex-Blake's revision of her book. My primary aim is to contextualize *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* in order to help readers better understand Jex-Blake's self-conscious use of anonymous self-citation as a tool to shape future historical accounts of her campaign. As I will explain, doing so impacts our understanding of the way she has been represented in contemporary and modern scholarship, enabling us to better understand and challenge influential accounts of Jex-Blake that stereotype her as impetuous, dangerous, and self-promoting and blame her for the fact that the female students were pushed from Edinburgh University in 1873.

Overview of *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*

Medical Women: A Thesis and a History (1886) is a revised and expanded second edition of Jex-Blake's *Medical Women: Two Essays* 1. *Medicine as a Profession for Women*. 2. *Medical Education of Women* (1872), itself both an expanded and updated version of Jex-Blake's 1869 essay, "Medicine as a Profession for Women," and an early narrative of her campaign through the spring of 1872. There is significant overlap between *Medical Women: Two Essays* and *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. In both she praises Russel and the *Scotsman* and uses her own *Scotsman* leaders as an appeal to authority; and in both she demonstrates a desire to shape the narrative of the campaign both in her time and in the future. It is also worth noting that Russel, who passed away in 1876, was very much alive and actively involved in supporting Jex-Blake's campaign in 1872.⁴²⁹ *Medical Women: Two Essays* was even mentioned in the

⁴²⁹ John Blackwood to Charles Reade. November 28, 1876. National Library of Scotland. A surviving letter from John Blackwood illustrates the commonly held belief within the community of Russel's personal support for the medical women's campaign. In a letter to Charles Reade he

Scotsman, so Russel would have been aware of it and of her practice of anonymous self-citation. While we do not know to what extent he supported or was involved in her decision to utilize this strategy, the fact that he did not challenge it and continued to actively support her campaign by providing her with a platform in the *Scotsman* suggests that he helped facilitate her approach by, at the very least, helping to keep her secret. Of course, it is unknown how many other people at the *Scotsman* knew of her authorship of the leaders.⁴³⁰

While Jex-Blake engages in the same practice of self-citation throughout her narrative in the 1872 text and makes significant use of footnotes and endnotes containing references to and praising the *Scotsman* in both the 1872 and 1886 editions, the latter version is significantly expanded with a Preface, over 120 additional pages of narrative, and 72 additional pages of endnotes. Significantly, it is also in the expanded 1886 version that she addresses future historians most explicitly. While *Medical Women: Two Essays* seems to have been produced with the primary aim of winning support for the female students at a critical juncture during the Edinburgh campaign, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* seems to have been created with the primary aim of directing and shaping future narratives of the campaign while simultaneously defending Jex-Blake's reputation.⁴³¹ Thus, the emphasis is more explicitly on the *Scotsman* and other texts that she refers to throughout the book.

reflects upon the somewhat muted reception of *A Woman Hater*. Blackwood had been concerned that because the book clearly represented the Edinburgh campaign and primarily sided with the female students, it would create controversy. By the time of the letter, Russel had recently passed away, and as Blackwood explains to Reade, had he survived to read the book, he would have promoted *A Woman Hater*: "I hear distant mutterings of wrath or surprise and sorrow among the Doctors but none of them have to address me on the much vexed Lady Question and altogether it has passed off much more quietly than I expected. Had poor Russell been alive he would have blown a blast that would have reached the Border. The last correspondence I ever had with him poor fellow was occasioned by my writing to him for pamphlets about the lady Doctors adventures in Edinburgh with which he liberally supplied me and I told him we would have a hearty laugh some months afterwards when he would see why I was looking into a matter so much out of my line."

⁴³⁰ It has always interested me that I have been unable to find any evidence that anyone in Edinburgh ever accused Jex-Blake of authoring the *Scotsman* leaders. She was a prolific author who was on close terms with both Russel and Findlay, and her published letters on the campaign were well known. Todd suggests that she was often at the *Scotsman* office as well.

⁴³¹ Jex-Blake would have had both personal and professional reasons to protect her reputation. As she had been the public face of the Edinburgh campaign and had come to represent female doctors in the public imagination, personal attacks on her could also be damaging to the movement. On a personal level, she was being directly blamed and attacked by George Hoggan and others in the years before the second edition was released, and it is reasonable to assume that defending herself against such attacks was at least one of her motivations in revising the text.

The 1886 version of *Medical Women* can be viewed as three texts in one because it is divided into three major parts, each very different but overlapping in theme and content: 1) “Medicine as a Profession for Women,” a revised version of Jex-Blake’s essay on medical women; 2) “Medical Education for Women,” a first-person account of the medical women’s campaign; and 3) “Appendix” and “Notes,” composed of excerpts from “the literature of the day.”

Part I: “Medicine as a Profession for Women”

The first section of *Medical Women* entitled “Medicine as a Profession for Women” contains a 60-page expanded, revised version of her 1869 treatise on female doctors. The 1869 chapter, “Medicine as a Profession for Women,” had an enormous impact on the rhetoric of the medical women’s campaign.⁴³² This section is an expanded and revised version of her original essay by the same name which was first published in *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* in 1869.⁴³³ It is framed with two quotations, one by Harriet Taylor Mill and one from Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* that draw upon the cultural authority of the authors to establish themes of individual rights as they pertain to women.⁴³⁴

⁴³² Swenson, *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction*, 93. Interestingly, while “Medicine as a Profession for Women” greatly impacted the rhetoric of the medical women’s campaign, it is not the kind of writing that most members of the public associated with Jex-Blake and her contributions. As Kristine Swenson points out, “the Jex-Blake with whom the public became familiar was less the measured, logical writer of ‘Medicine as a Profession for Women’ and more the ‘lion-hearted’ heroine represented in press reports and later in Charles Reade’s . . . *A Woman-Hater* (1877).”

⁴³³ Jex-Blake, Sophia. “Medicine as a Profession for Women,” 1869. Under the title of the essay, Jex-Blake adds a note that it has been “reprinted, with alterations and large additions” from the original essay.

⁴³⁴ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. The full quoted passage from Mrs. J.S. Mill is as follows: “We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their ‘proper sphere.’ The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to. What this is cannot be ascertained without complete liberty of choice.” And from E.B.B.’s *Aurora Leigh*: “You misconceive the question like a man, / Who sees a woman as the complement / Of his sex merely. You forget too much / That every creature, female as t the male, / Stands single in responsible act and thought, / And also in birth and death / I would rather take my part / With God’s Dead, who afford to walk in white, / Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet here / And gather up my feet from even a step / For fear to soil my gown in so much dust. / I choose to walk at all risks.”

In this essay, Jex-Blake systematically articulates possible objections to female doctors and rebuts them with a series of philosophical arguments in support of women's right to become doctors and the potential benefits to society. Her tone throughout is rational and philosophical, and while she occasionally draws upon her personal experiences when needed, they are largely absent from the narrative. She begins by challenging her readers to question "on what grounds the popular opinions rest, and how far they are the result of habit, custom, and prejudice."⁴³⁵ As she puts it in her opening lines:

It is a very comfortable faith to hold that 'whatever is, is best' . . . but it is a faith which is perhaps best preserved by careful avoidance of too much enquiry 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."⁴³⁶

Having framed the section by asking readers to consider ways in which contemporary views are shaped by "habit, custom, and prejudice" and encouraging them to instead measure the present against "eternal principles of right and wrong," Jex-Blake emphasizes principles of progress that can be seen throughout her articles: No "thinking man" could believe they had already reached "the zenith of truth," or assert that "no further upward progress is possible."⁴³⁷

Jex-Blake aligns her campaign with progress, reason, and justice. Drawing upon the authority of the scientific method, she asks readers to test their prejudices against women in the

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 3.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 4.

medical profession “to see how far their truth is supported by evidence.”⁴³⁸ This point is carried through the section, as she presents herself as a scientific, rational narrator. The largest section of the essay - exactly half of it at 30 pages - consists of historical examples of medical women from “the earliest classical times” to the present.⁴³⁹ She then tracks historical cases of medical women and argues that they had been “pushed from a profession in which they once had a recognized place.”⁴⁴⁰ She also draws upon it when she responds to critics who claim that women cannot succeed by requesting that they simply allow women a fair field to test that belief:

It is very curious to notice how the very people who loudly maintain the existence of this vast mental disparity, are just those who strenuously resist every endeavor to submit their theory to the touchstone of experience, instead of welcoming the application of those tests that might be expected so triumphantly to prove their point!⁴⁴¹

She proceeds to make a series of arguments in response to critics. For example, to the argument that “nature and custom” have decided against female physicians, she argues that before the rise of modern medicine, it was women who cared for the sick and injured. “[W]omen are naturally inclined and fitted for medical practice,” she writes in an appeal to a commonly held belief at the time.⁴⁴² To arguments that women “do not require, and are not fitted to receive, the scientific education needful for a first-rate physician,” she appeals to a Millsean argument that “each human being must be ‘a law unto himself’” and decide what is needed: “If women claim that

⁴³⁸ Ibid, 5.

⁴³⁹ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁴² Ibid, 6.

they need and appreciate instruction in any or all sciences, I do not know who has the right to deny the assertion.”⁴⁴³

Part II. “Medical Education of Women”

The second section of *Medical Women* consists of Jex-Blake’s narrative of the medical women’s campaign of the 1870s, with primary emphasis on the struggle in Edinburgh. This section is itself divided into two parts: The first and longest is entitled “The Battle in Edinburgh”; and the second is entitled “The Victory Won.”⁴⁴⁴ The titles themselves affirm one of Jex-Blake’s goals for the text, which was to contradict those who had framed the struggle in Edinburgh as a failure by asserting that the Edinburgh campaign had in fact been a victory because it laid the groundwork for the success in London, where Jex-Blake founded the London School of Medicine for Women in 1874 and worked behind the scenes to help facilitate the passage of the Enabling Bill that essentially opened the profession to women in Britain in 1876.

One of the noticeable aspects of this section is its emphasis on the “literature of the day”; Jex-Blake frequently quotes long passages from newspapers, especially the *Scotsman*, and she relies heavily on detailed footnotes containing excerpts from newspapers and periodicals that covered the campaign. In fact, this section of *Medical Women* practically overflows with footnotes containing lengthy periodical and newspaper quotations, as well as references to the Appendix and Notes, and these publications are frequently discussed and quoted within the narrative as well. The footnotes in this section of *Medical Women* are extensive. The majority of them contain references to specific issues of newspapers and journals; each issue name and date

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 39.

⁴⁴⁴ In addition, every other page contains a header such as “Origin of the Riot” and “Necessity for Lawsuit” which emphasize her key points.

is provided in the footnote in a manner similar to a modern day scholarly citation, and many are followed by a long quotation. The vast majority of these refer to the *Scotsman*. In my count of this section, I identified 118 footnotes containing direct references to specific periodical issues (name of publication and date of issue). Of these, about half - 56 of the 118 - referred to the *Scotsman*. For perspective, the next most frequently cited publications, the *Lancet* and *The Times*, each appear in the footnotes only eight times; the ever-supportive *Daily Review*, five; and the *Glasgow Herald*, just three. Thus, no other publication is even close to the number of *Scotsman* references that she includes, suggesting that the *Scotsman* was the paper that Jex-Blake was most interested in directing her readers' attention to. And this is just the periodicals that were specifically referred to in the footnotes, not counting footnote references to the expansive Notes, which I discuss below.

This narrative is the most frequently quoted part of Jex-Blake's *Medical Women* and the section that most scholars draw upon when referencing the text. Considering how witty and engaging Jex-Blake's first-hand account of events can be, it is no surprise that lines from *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* are frequently sprinkled throughout historical narratives.⁴⁴⁵ Scholars have not only paid attention to her descriptions of events, but have also utilized many of the articles and excerpts that she quotes and references in their reconstructions of this moment. In part this could be because the form Jex-Blake employs is recognizable to scholars who also deploy footnotes to secure authority. In this respect Jex-Blake's efforts to direct future writers and shape the narrative of the campaign has been largely successful. However, to my knowledge there are no studies focusing exclusively upon Jex-Blake's strategic

⁴⁴⁵ When I read this text for the first time in 2017, I was shocked that it had never been included in any anthology I had seen or been assigned in any of my previous classes at the three universities where I had studied graduate-level Victorian literature. Not only was the subject matter fascinating, the book was a real pleasure to read thanks to Jex-Blake's entertaining writing style. In fact, I wasn't even able to find a high quality bound copy of it in any of the usual places; I was forced to send a PDF to the print shop and pay to have it bound. I would love to see an accessible, quality edited paperback version of *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* in the future.

use of these sources as a rhetorical strategy, and none that acknowledge her involvement in the production of the *Scotsman* texts that she cites.

Part 3: “Appendix” and “Notes”

The third section of *Medical Women* primarily consists of lengthy reprints of periodical and newspaper articles, legal records, university records, and other relevant documents, most containing brief framing statements by Jex-Blake. This section is organized into two parts: First, a 47-page Appendix, which contains a full reprint of the summary of the Action of Declarator brought by the women students in 1872-73. It is not surprising that Jex-Blake would want to feature this document since it contains page after page of legal summaries from highly regarded legal professionals agreeing with the female students and disparaging the medical doctors. As Jex-Blake explains in “The Victory Won” section of *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*:

As the lawsuit against the University seems to be a matter of considerable importance, I have given in an Appendix such summary of the facts, arguments, and judgments as space will allow. This summary was drawn up by me immediately after the trial and was submitted to one of our counsel, to ensure its accuracy. The counsel on the other side were also asked to revise it, but declined to do so.⁴⁴⁶

Of course, Jex-Blake’s efforts to print the judgments and distribute them in 1872 - and again in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* - are yet another example of her desire to preserve and pass on an accurate historical record. Like *Medical Women* itself, this effort began in 1872. The

⁴⁴⁶ Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 144.

original pamphlet can be viewed today at the National Library of Scotland, and on it there is no indication that Jex-Blake herself put it together, as she reveals in her 1886 edition of *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*.⁴⁴⁷

Another 100 pages in the “Notes” section, printed in a font size that is approximately half that of the font in the rest of the book, consists primarily of reprinted journal and newspaper articles framed with Jex-Blake’s explanatory statements. This section contains Jex-Blake’s framing statements and many individual documents that were specifically curated by her, providing us with a clear glimpse into what she saw as the most important part of the story. One of the most interesting things that she does in this section is to frame a note entry with a theme or idea and then curate excerpts or examples from different publications together and to make an argument. For example, she frames one note by explaining, “The following letter is an excellent illustration of the indignation felt by the more manly students at the events referred to.”⁴⁴⁸ This note is followed by a long excerpt from the *Scotsman*’s correspondence page in which a male medical student condemns the behavior of male students opposing the female students and blames their actions in large part on their professors.⁴⁴⁹ In another such note she includes a selection of excerpts from letters to the editor designed to demonstrate that female patients suffered as a result of not having the option to see a female physician. She frames this section in her own words:

The following are a few only out of many indications of the existence of the painful feeling alluded to in the text. The reader will hardly need to be reminded that this is especially a subject respecting which a maximum of feeling may well

⁴⁴⁷ In fact, when I first read the pamphlet, I had forgotten about Jex-Blake’s line in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* and did not make the connection that the booklet I read was the one she referred to until returning to the text later.

⁴⁴⁸ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Note Q, 66.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 66-7. This passage from Note Q was reprinted from the *Scotsman*, November 22, 1870.

exist with a minimum of expression, for hardly anything but a sense of duty would make a woman write on such a question to the newspapers.⁴⁵⁰

This frame is followed by a series of quotations from newspaper letters to the editor in which the writers testify to this feeling - again, based on my count, about half of these are from the *Scotsman*. For example, “A Medical Student” writes, “Many a time have I stood by the bedside of poor young girls who seemed ready to sink under the shame of being exposed before a number of young men--a feeling which could not be overcome even by the agony of the operations.”⁴⁵¹ In another passage from this section, “An Englishwoman” argues, “It is surely time for men to cease to speak of what women feel in this matter. It is impossible for them to know what women will never tell them.”⁴⁵² It is significant that here Jex-Blake is elevating voices from the community section of these papers, attempting to make such conversations part of her argument and part of the official historical record. She is asking readers to look to the *Scotsman* as an authoritative historical document, not only for its opinionated leaders, but because of the public discussion in its correspondence pages. As I have demonstrated, many of these letters were solicited by Jex-Blake herself, and based on Todd’s mysterious references in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, it appears that she frequently contributed by helping to organize them on the page. So in a way even here she is promoting her own work. This also shows how important personal testimonials were in making the case for medical women.

The Hoggan Chapter

⁴⁵⁰ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women : A Thesis and a History*, Note B, 50-51.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 52. This passage from Note B was reprinted from the *Scotsman*, December 26, 1870.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 52. This passage from Note B was reprinted from the *Scotsman* of June 6, 1872

A bitter public exchange with a former classmate two years before the publication of Jex-Blake's revised version of *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* illustrates the challenges Jex-Blake faced as she revised the second edition of her book for publication. For some context, although women won the legal right to become physicians in 1876 - in no small part due to Jex-Blake's personal efforts - and although Jex-Blake was an established physician in Edinburgh in 1886 when the second edition of *Medical Women* was published, she continued to face many of the same social barriers that she had encountered during the campaign. Despite the hard fought legal triumphs of the 1870s, gender norms that tied women to the domestic sphere persisted. As Kristin Kondrlik explains, early female physicians continued the struggle to "win recognition of their authority" in a male-dominated field where their fitness and capacity for medical study and practice continued to be called into question.⁴⁵³ As Kondrlik has demonstrated in her research on Jex-Blake's efforts to promote medical women after the campaign, Jex-Blake maintained a deep investment in representations of medical women throughout the end of her life. For example, she wrote numerous reviews of fictional representations of medical women and worried that the wrong kinds of representations would harm the movement in the future. Thus, her revision of *Medical Women* was not only part of her effort to rehabilitate her own image but also part of this larger lifelong effort to protect the cause.

In addition to the general struggles faced by Victorian medical women at this time, Jex-Blake faced a number of challenges that were unique to her. At this point in her career she had, to a large extent, become alienated from Garrett Anderson and her supporters. Jex-Blake had been stung when she was pushed out of leadership positions within the London School of Medicine for Women, which she almost single-handedly founded in 1874 even as Garrett,

⁴⁵³ Kondrlik, Kristin. "From Victorian Novels to #LikeALadyDoc," 110.

Thorne, and others strongly advised against it, insinuating that Jex-Blake was too controversial. While Jex-Blake had resigned to Thorne's appointment to the post, admitting that Thorne's "perfect" temperament made her a better fit, it was harder to accept Garrett's Anderson's appointment as Dean of the school years later. Jex-Blake's decision to move to Edinburgh and start a practice and a women's medical school of her own upset some of the female doctors, who feared the appearance of a division within their ranks and believed that all medical women should stand by the London school. It was at this time, when most of her colleagues were established in London and Jex-Blake launching her school in Edinburgh, that news reached her of a chapter that was in development - one that would be critical of her place in the Edinburgh campaign and attempt to challenge the narrative put forth by a number of Jex-Blake's supporters.

Chapter in Progress

In 1884 Jex-Blake learned that a chapter on the medical women's campaign was going to be included in a major anthology entitled *The Woman Question in Europe*, and she attempted to access the manuscript before it was published.⁴⁵⁴ Dr. Frances Hoggan⁴⁵⁵ had followed Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's advice to all English women who wished to study medicine in 1867 and left Britain to quietly pursue her medical degree in Zurich just as Jex-Blake was beginning her campaign in Edinburgh.⁴⁵⁶ She later returned to London, where she worked with Garrett and

⁴⁵⁴ Centre for Research Collections. Unpublished archival manuscript. George Hoggan to Crum Brown, 1883. While revising the chapter for publication, Hoggan shared it with Professor of Chemistry Crum Brown, who had long been hostile to Jex-Blake. In a private letter to Brown, Hoggan writes that Jex-Blake is "moving heaven and Earth" to get her hands on the draft before publication: "None of us can know how she came to know it was being written."

⁴⁵⁵ Frances Morgan married and subsequently changed her name to Frances Hoggan in 1874. However, I will refer to her as Frances Hoggan throughout this dissertation to avoid confusion.

⁴⁵⁶ See *The Times*, August 5 and 23, 1873. Jex-Blake and Garrett Anderson debated this issue in letters published in *The Times* shortly after the female students were pushed out of Edinburgh, and Jex-Blake discusses the exchange in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. While Garrett Anderson's letter, published first on August 5, claimed that "the real solution of the difficulty will be found in Englishwomen seeking abroad that which is at present denied to them in their own country," Jex-Blake's reply argued that the best way forward was to "use every opportunity open to us in this country to qualify ourselves as thoroughly as possible for the profession we have chosen, and then . . . to demand, quietly but firmly, that provision for our ultimate recognition as medical practitioners which we have a right to expect at the hands of Legislature." Frances Morgan

treated patients as an unlicensed practitioner. In 1876, when the Enabling Bill was passed in large part due to Jex-Blake's efforts, Hoggan was able to immediately qualify as a practitioner. Frances Hoggan's husband, Dr. George Hoggan, who had been Jex-Blake's former classmate at the University of Edinburgh, was intimately involved in the project and planned to write a large section of the chapter himself.⁴⁵⁷ Hoggan had known Jex-Blake during the Edinburgh years, having served as Dr. Handyside's class assistant while the women were taking anatomy at the Intramural school, and he had also been one of the volunteer body-guards who walked the female students home during the Surgeons' Hall Riot. In addition he had offered to teach the female students chemistry after Crum Brown refused - before being publicly rejected as an Intramural Lecturer by the University, becoming in the process something of a casualty of the University's effort to block the female students.⁴⁵⁸ Although George Hoggan had been an ally in Edinburgh, the fact that Jex-Blake was seeking a copy of the chapter and asking for the opportunity to include her own account suggests that by this point in time, she must have known that the chapter would not be flattering to her.

While it is unclear what exactly Jex-Blake knew about the chapter before it was released, unpublished archival records prove that George Hoggan worked behind the scenes as it was composed, seeking corroboration by writing to professors who had opposed the women students. He sent one letter marked "private and confidential" to Professor of Anatomy William Turner,

(later Hoggan) followed Garrett Anderson's advice, but it must be noted that it was in large part due to Jex-Blake's efforts on behalf of women's medical education in London that she was able to return and qualify as a physician in Britain in 1876.

⁴⁵⁷ Frances and George Hoggan were at this point known for co-publishing a number of scientific articles, so it would not have been a stretch to have assumed that George would be involved in this chapter as well, especially considering that he was the one who personally witnessed the Edinburgh campaign and knew Jex-Blake at that time while Frances did not. Jex-Blake also would have known of Frances Morgan's close association with Garrett Anderson.

⁴⁵⁸ As I discuss in Chapter 2, Jex-Blake criticized the University for rejecting Hoggan in the papers. It is unclear whether his rejection and the subsequent publicization of it in the *Scotsman* inspired any resentment toward the female students' campaign in general or Jex-Blake in particular.

one of the female students' most determined opponents throughout the campaign.⁴⁵⁹ In fact, Turner was well known at this point for his opposition to female doctors in general, citing their smaller brain size and "the excess of the emotional element and deficiency of the logical element in women's minds" as the reasons for his position.⁴⁶⁰ Simply put, he was not a neutral and unbiased anonymous evaluator, and Hoggan would have known this, as Turner's views had been publicly expressed throughout the Edinburgh campaign and beyond. In his letter to Turner, which accompanied a draft of the chapter manuscript, Hoggan mentions Jex-Blake's desire to learn what he was about to write and their effort to conceal this information from her. As he explains:

I ask this to be otherwise private because we know that Miss Jex-Blake is moving heaven and earth to get the editor to show her the proof or allow her to give her version to the world at the same time. Knowing as she does how much I was opposed to her line of action she realizes rightly that what we have to say will not be flattering to her. None of us can learn how she came to know that it was being written.⁴⁶¹

As the letter reveals, George Hoggan believed that Jex-Blake was extremely disturbed by her knowledge of the chapter-in-progress and was attempting to obtain some control over the narrative, but her efforts were refused. This letter is striking in part because it reveals how much

⁴⁵⁹ Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 190. As Jex-Blake notes in the narrative portion of *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Turner's views on female doctors were publicly expressed on numerous occasions, and notably in 1875 when he spoke at a General Medical Council debate over the legislation on female doctors. Jex-Blake writes that at this meeting, Turner "upheld the reputation of the Edinburgh medical clique for bigotry and intolerance." As she explains: "[Turner] actually not being ashamed, as an anatomist, to quote the worn-out old argument about the smaller size of women's brains . . . also proceeded to assure the Council that the excess of the emotional element and deficiency of the logical element in women's minds quite unfitted them for medical practice." Such views were expressed by Turner many times during the campaign, as reported in numerous publications, and are a matter of public record. Certainly Turner's stance on female doctors generally and his strong opposition to her campaign specifically reveals a strong bias and negates his ability to provide unbiased testimony on Jex-Blake's campaign.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ George Hoggan to Professor William Turner, Oct. 11, 1883. University of Edinburgh Centre for Research Collections.

active struggle there was over the historical account of the campaign. If Jex-Blake was indeed concerned about the chapter, she had good reason for feeling that way. Her opponents were intent upon denying her voice and publishing their own version of the narrative. Hoggan continues:

[T]he struggle in Edinburgh comes up for consideration but that struggle will be described differently from the way it is described by Miss Jex-Blake . . . You are probably aware that although one of the most energetic supporters of the movement in Edinburgh, I was very much opposed to the manner in which the agitation was conducted and from the very first, I let no opportunity pass of letting the leader [Jex-Blake] know my views upon the subject however distasteful I knew these to be to her . . . The time has now come I think when the true cause of the failure ought to be told to the world as it is viewed by one who isn't at all events a notorious friend of the general movement.⁴⁶²

As Hoggan would make clear in the essay itself, “the true cause of failure” that he wished to share with the world was, in a word, Jex-Blake. Specifically, he would identify her decision to challenge the University when Pechey was refused the Hope Scholarship as the primary source of the failure.

Hoggan's description of a “notorious friend of the general movement” most likely refers to James Stansfeld, M.P, whose detailed account of the campaign (1869-1876) had been published in *The Nineteenth Century* in 1879.⁴⁶³ Stansfeld's essay was the most authoritative

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Stansfeld, James. “Medical Women.” *The Nineteenth Century*, 1879. Stansfeld collaborated with Jex-Blake as he worked to pass the Cowper-Temple Bill and later the Enabling Act. His account of the campaign provided a positive assessment of Jex-Blake and her role.

account of the campaign until the Hoggan chapter was published, and Stansfeld was well known at this point for being a supporter of the movement for female doctors and a primary figure in the passage of the Enabling Bill. It is worth noting that in this influential essay, Stansfeld gives Jex-Blake credit for beginning the movement in 1869 with her initial application to Edinburgh. Moreover, he very clearly identifies the opposition to the female students from within the University, and not Jex-Blake, as the source of the problem:

[P]rofessors refused to teach the women, male students mobbed them, university authorities sought escape from the honourable obligations under which they had voluntarily placed themselves, by the suggestion that they had exceeded their powers.⁴⁶⁴

In other words, Stansfeld suggests that the people with power within the University who had opposed the female students, and not Jex-Blake and her alleged mistakes, were to blame for the so-called failure at Edinburgh. He also emphasizes many of the same points that Jex-Blake aimed to elevate in her own leaders and in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, such as the Action of Declarator by the Lord Ordinary (Lord Gifford) in 1872, which ruled in their favor. Of the 1872 appeal and the female students' eventual removal from the University, Stansfeld again blames the university: "Had the university been desirous not to fail in honour, but to fulfill their obligations if they could, they might have rested upon this judicial decision."⁴⁶⁵ He then emphasizes Jex-Blake's role as the founder of the London School of Medicine for Women, explaining that she was the one who came up with the idea for the school, recruited support, and

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 890.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

found the building. As he concludes his essay, he praises Jex-Blake's contributions to the movement:

These pages will, I think, have presented to the reader's mind evidence of a tough and persistent and continuous struggle . . . The forces of greatest concentration have been, in my view, on the one hand the Edinburgh University led by Sir Robert Christison, on the other the women claimants led by Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake. Defeated at Edinburgh, she carried her appeal to the highest court, that most able to decide and to redress, the High Court of Parliament representing the nation itself. The result we see at last. Those who hail it as the answer which they sought have both to thank, in senses and proportions which they may for themselves decide.⁴⁶⁶

This is the narrative that Hoggan intended to challenge by presenting an alternative story in which Jex-Blake was to blame for the Edinburgh "failure," and Garrett Anderson and those who had followed her lead were the ones who had done the most to promote the cause.

The Hoggan manuscript eventually made its way to Crum Brown, who had been the Professor of Chemistry during the Hope Scholarship affair involving Edith Pechey. As I explained in Chapter 2, following this incident Brown turned against the female students, voting against the admission of women altogether. Having read a manuscript of the essay, Brown provides feedback in which he refers to specific pages or passages. His letter to George Hoggan contains a surprising reflection on Jex-Blake's role in the Hope Scholarship affair. In response to

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 900-901. It is not surprising that Jex-Blake approved this authoritative account of the Edinburgh campaign and aimed to publicize it by quoting from it in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, where she praises "our invaluable friend, Mr. Stansfeld" and "his thoroughly chivalrous paper" (167). In fact, she even makes a direct appeal to readers, encouraging them to read the paper themselves before she recounts the history of the London struggle in her own words: "I beg to refer [to Stansfeld's essay] any one who may wish to read the history of this movement, as it appeared to one who had no interest at stake on either side, except the one paramount interest of a love of justice and right" (167). She includes a large extract from the article in her Notes (Note OO, p. 96) as well.

“p.72,” he writes: “It appears to me that rather too much is made of the Hope Prize incident. It was natural enough that Miss Pechey, or rather Miss Blake for her, should claim this prize and refuse my offer of an equivalent.”⁴⁶⁷ He restates this position and pushes back against the central place that Hoggan gave the Hope Prize Incident in another section of his feedback as well, noting: “I scarcely think that the Hope Prize question was of the importance [that Hoggan makes of it] . . . But the writer evidently knows much of this history of which I am ignorant. The facts are correctly stated.”⁴⁶⁸ Hoggan would later amplify this last sentence when it served his purpose.

Interestingly, Brown also notes that what had upset him the most had been Jex-Blake’s “threat” to go to the papers: “Miss Blake’s threat that if I adhered to my view of my duty in this matter, I should be held up to public scorn in the newspapers, a threat which was . . . carried out, changed my opinion of that lady’s character but did not affect my opinion of the general question.”⁴⁶⁹ Here Crum accuses Jex-Blake of being dishonest and implies that she had something to do with the criticism that he received in the papers following his decision to award the Hope Scholarship to the next male student in line instead of Jex-Blake. How much he knew about her level of involvement with the *Scotsman* is unclear, but it is unlikely that he knew of her authorship of the leaders, as he almost certainly would have mentioned it. What is clear is that Brown seems to have believed that Jex-Blake had some impact on the bad press he received. If Brown became this upset at the thought that Jex-Blake went to the press with a story about him,

⁴⁶⁷ Crum Brown to George Hoggan. University of Edinburgh Centre for Research Collections. This source is handwritten notes referring to specific pages of the chapter, that seem to accompany a piece of the draft of Hoggan’s article. Only a few pages remain, two of which appear to have been crumpled at one point, and no names and dates are on the pages. This probably explains the lack of attribution within the archive. Although the text is not labeled as being authored by Crum Brown, I was able to confirm the identity of the author by the contents in the page. First, in his letter to Turner, which I referenced previously, Hoggan says that he plans to show the chapter to Crum Brown. Most importantly, the writer of these pages addresses the Hope Scholarship section using “I” to refer to incidents that Brown himself was involved in, as for example when he writes of “my offer of an equivalent” (prize) during the Hope Scholarship affair. He also requests that “Mrs. Crum Brown” have her name omitted, “having never expressed any opinion” on the subject. And lastly, Hoggan somewhat misleadingly quotes from this document when he writes in the *Academy* that an authoritative source confirmed his Hope Scholarship narrative by noting that “The facts are accurately stated.”

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

one can only imagine how he and the other professors would have reacted if they had known that Jex-Blake was writing all of the “scathing” *Scotsman* leaders about them! It is also worth noting that in his representation of himself to Hoggan, Brown downplays his antagonistic stance toward the female student and affirms multiple times that he continued to support the “general question,” yet University records reveal that Crum not only opposed the women’s continued education after the Hope Scholarship affair, but also reversed course on his support for women’s medical education in general, voting against it at every opportunity. One possible explanation for Brown’s behavior is that he did not want to be perceived as having changed his stance simply because of his hurt feelings over being attacked in the press.

Brown continues by also blaming Jex-Blake, but for a reason that differs from Hoggan’s. Brown claims that Jex-Blake is not to blame for challenging the Hope Scholarship but rather because, as he puts it, she “could not be trusted”:

What brought the Edinburgh experiment to an end was the conviction among many of those who at first supported Jex-Blake, that she could not be trusted. The first step would never have been taken had there not been what was universally regarded as a promise that the university would not be put to inconvenience on account of the experiment.⁴⁷⁰

Based on this statement, it appears that Brown was angry because he believed that the female students were at the University as a favor and should only be allowed to remain if they could do so without inconveniencing anyone. As he puts it: “The university was bound in honour not to compel any professor to teach women. This was the first condition upon which they were admitted.”⁴⁷¹ In her effort to gain admittance, Jex-Blake had agreed not to inconvenience the

⁴⁷⁰Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Crum Brown to George Hoggan. University of Edinburgh Centre for Research Collections.

professors, and yet she had certainly done so - in Brown's case in particular! Thus, she had failed to live up to what Brown saw as her end of the bargain, and he not only opposed her but labeled her "dishonest" for doing so.

As these letters reveal, George Hoggan was deeply involved in the composition of the chapter, and he aimed to use the chapter to damage Jex-Blake's reputation. As he said himself, his primary aim was to change the dominant narrative by placing the blame on Jex-Blake. Yet as I discuss later in this chapter, Hoggan's chapter has been utilized and cited by a number of prominent modern scholars without any mention of Hoggan's stated intentions. Just as Jex-Blake feared, Hoggan's narrative has had a lasting effect on her legacy and the story of the campaign.

"Women in Medicine"

When the chapter finally appeared in print, "Women in Medicine" was billed as having only one author, Elizabeth Hoggan, despite the fact that George Hoggan wrote six pages of the chapter himself and had obviously been involved in the chapter's construction. Under the title in large letters, "By Frances Elizabeth Hoggan, M.D" is printed.⁴⁷² Directly under this line, a short biography of Frances appears, stating that she had married George Hoggan, "a staunch supporter of equal rights of women," in 1874.⁴⁷³ The introduction also notes that George and Frances had co-published many scientific articles. In fact, the framing of this chapter establishes the Hoggans as champions of women and equal rights, lending ostensible credibility to their attacks on Jex-Blake.

⁴⁷² Hoggan, Frances, "Women in Medicine," 63.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

Frances Hoggan directly attacks Jex-Blake in just one section. After explaining in detail that she studied medicine abroad and successfully followed in Garrett Anderson's footsteps, she wryly notes that in Edinburgh "the solution of the question of medical study had been sought another way" by Jex-Blake.⁴⁷⁴ She then provides a bridge to Hoggan's narrative in which she compares Jex-Blake's strategy unfavorably to Elizabeth Garrett's:

Had the same [Garrett Anderson's] policy of unobtrusively working on, claiming no distinctions, and sedulously and quietly avoiding all occasions of rivalry between the sexes, which led to such marked success at Zurich . . . been followed . . . the results of the Edinburgh experiment was assured, and years of struggle, heart-burnings, injustice, and hope deferred might have been averted. But through want of tact or patience, the regrettable incident occurred, which is here given in the words of one* [a footnote here identifies the writer of the following section as George Hoggan] who was throughout one of the ladies' warm friends and helpers.⁴⁷⁵

It is noteworthy that this short paragraph by Frances Hoggan is the one that has been picked up and cited by numerous twentieth and twenty-first century scholars of the campaign like Thomas Bonner as evidence of the medical community's stance on Jex-Blake, while George Hoggan's six-page narrative is less often cited. Perhaps this is because the idea that a fellow pioneering medical woman had criticized Jex-Blake carries more weight. "The regrettable incident" that Frances Hoggan refers to here is the Hope Scholarship incident.

At this point, George Hoggan begins his portion of the narrative:

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 71-2.

As one of the most devoted servants and supporters of the cause of medical women at that time in Edinburgh, I may describe what I, from personal knowledge, know to be the turning point at which the cause, which seem to have a fair chance of success, was destroyed by the injudicious conduct of its leader. That point was the agitation connected with the Hope Scholarship. In the first place it was clearly understood that the ladies were admitted into the University of Edinburgh only on the basis of an experiment. There was no equality of rights granted to them with the other students, but only certain privileges.⁴⁷⁶

He goes on to assert that Crum, “a warm friend of the women’s cause,” never imagined that in giving female and male students the same examination he was “forging a weapon that would be used against himself.”⁴⁷⁷ It is important to note here that Hoggan did not take Crum’s advice in two key respects. First, as we have seen, Crum believed the Hoggan made “too much” of the Hope Scholarship incident and stated that he thought it had been fair and reasonable for Jex-Blake to have fought for it on Pechey’s behalf. Nevertheless, Hoggan makes it very clear that Jex-Blake’s decision to challenge the Hope Scholarship was the key reason for the “failure.” Also, in describing Crum as “a warm friend of the women’s cause,” Hoggan was knowingly acting against Crum’s wishes. As Crum explains in his feedback to Hoggan, he had never been such a strong advocate of the female students: “‘a warm friend of the women’s cause’ perhaps rather too strong,” he writes of Hoggan’s description of him. “I then held, as I do now, that it was right that women should be allowed to study medicine and that some women were well suited for the medical profession. I was willing to do what I could.”⁴⁷⁸ It appears that Hoggan decided “a

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 72.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, 73.

⁴⁷⁸ Crum Brown to George Hoggan. University of Edinburgh Centre for Research Collections.

warm friend of the movement” better supported his intention to attack Jex-Blake, so he left it in despite Brown’s objection.

Hoggan proceeds to blame the Hope Scholarship and Jex-Blake’s role in it for all of the problems in Edinburgh, again dismissing Brown’s feedback on the matter. While “the leader” (Jex-Blake) had erroneously imagined that if the women succeeded, they would “enlist public sympathy,” the opposite occurred.⁴⁷⁹ Hoggan then laments that a “long series of violent attacks was made by the press” while meanwhile Brown “did all he could to pacify and satisfy the ladies.”⁴⁸⁰ From this point forward, the excitement in the press and the University turned everything upside down:

Those professors who had remained benevolently neutral, when they might have been actively antagonistic . . . now thought that they had made a mistake, and determined to get rid of the rebellious element, which in the guise of a few young ladies had determined to hold them up to public obloquy.⁴⁸¹

In Hoggan’s narrative, the female students were surrounded by warm friends and “benevolently neutral” professors who never had a thought of removing the female students from the University until Jex-Blake transformed the group into a “rebellious element.” The professors and Crum in particular are treated as victims, as Brown’s support for the female students is “forged into a weapon,” and he is subjected to “violent attacks” from the press. Of course, in noting that the professors aimed to “pacify and satisfy” the female students and emphasizing that the medical faculty had only allowed them to study as a favor, Hoggan reveals his belief that the male professors’ feelings mattered more than the female students’ feelings and that women actually

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, 73.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, 74-5.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, 75.

had no rights at all in the University. Such a position would, of course, have put him in direct conflict with Jex-Blake, who held the opposing view. Jex-Blake was advocating for structural change and was not content with the idea that a few exceptional individuals might be allowed to become doctors without fundamentally altering the status of the profession.

Hoggan's alternative narrative in which he claims that the Edinburgh professors were supportive until the Hope Scholarship incident is contradicted by University records including notes from the Senatus and University Court meetings. Yet this argument had been made by the female students' enemies even in the 1870s. Catriona Blake writes of one exchange in September of 1873 in which University of Edinburgh Principal Alexander Grant argued that *all* of the professors had wanted women to be admitted for medical study.⁴⁸² As Grant puts it, there were no barriers whatsoever to the female students' admission; they did not graduate because the 1869 regulations had been "experimental" and "the experiment had simply failed." As might be expected, Jex-Blake responded in the correspondence pages of *The Times* arguing against Grant's assertion.⁴⁸³ The important point here is that Hoggan is repeating a narrative that Edinburgh professors had used to defend themselves even during the campaign, and it is easy to imagine why Jex-Blake might have been concerned that such a story could eventually become the dominant narrative in the historical record. Whether she was aware that notes from University Court and Senatus meetings would be preserved as historical documents is unknown. However, most of them were, and they reveal that there were a number of objections to the female students raised even before the Hope Scholarship incident occurred.

⁴⁸² Blake, Catriona. *The Charge of the Parasols*, 161

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

In his concluding lines, Hoggan gives himself credit for having predicted the female students' downfall and seems to imply that he has the ability to see exactly what would have happened in an alternate timeline when he makes concrete claims about exactly what would have happened if Jex-Blake had behaved more like Garrett-Anderson:

The consequences were foreseen and foretold by many, including myself, to those most interested . . . Friendly professors became first neutral, next hostile. The ladies were driven out of the university and out of medical school, and the question which, judiciously conducted, might have had a favorable solution within five years, was thrown back 50 years further in Edinburgh than any other medical school of the three kingdoms.⁴⁸⁴

In this passage Hoggan claims if only the female students in Edinburgh had behaved better, a favorable solution would have occurred within five years. Instead, the movement was “thrown back” 50 years.

Jex-Blake v. Hoggan in *The Academy*

If Jex-Blake had been anxious while awaiting the publication of the Hoggan chapter, her concerns would have been confirmed when *The Woman Question in Europe: a series of original essays* finally appeared in print. The fact that *The Woman Question*, like the 1869 anthology *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture: A series of essays*, to which Jex-Blake herself had been invited to submit the chapter on medical women, had also been framed with an introduction by

⁴⁸⁴ Hoggan, Frances. “Women in Medicine,” 75.

Frances Power Cobbe must have invited comparisons. In 1869 Jex-Blake had been called upon to speak for the movement in a similar anthology, and now that role was being filled by authors who sought to discredit her. She had not only been shut out of the book itself but prevented - at least for some time - from seeing a draft of the chapter or responding to it before it went into print. This itself indicates the extent to which Jex-Blake had been pushed from the center of the movement that she had dedicated her life to. One can only imagine that the experience of waiting and then reading the text must have been a painful one for her.

Not surprisingly, shortly after the book came out, Jex-Blake wrote a review of it, which was published in *The Academy*. She begins with some criticism of the physical characteristics of the book that reveal her knowledge of the printing industry: “[T]he inconveniently large size of the volume depends simply on margin and binding . . . the island of type, occupying less than two-thirds of each page, might easily have accommodated itself to the dimensions of ordinary octavo.”⁴⁸⁵ She then continues by calling into question the way in which authors were selected for the book:

[N]o clue is given to the principle on which [contributors to the volume] were selected . . . As a matter of fact only one of the five English writers is in any sense markedly representative of the department she has taken in hand . . . it seems not unlikely that in some cases a better choice might have been made.”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Jex-Blake, Sophia. “The Woman Question in Europe.” *The Academy*, Oct. 4, 1884, 209. The passage continues: “In point of fact the book reminds one strongly of the scamper through Europe which is characteristic of our western cousins, who can ‘do’ London in two days, and Rome in four-and-twenty hours, and who consider that a country has been seen when they have whizzed through it behind an express engine.”

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid. In characteristic fashion Jex-Blake then outlines what her own strategy would have been and criticizes editorial decisions: “It might have been more to the purpose if some systematic plan had been accepted by all the writers, as comparison of one country with another would then have been more feasible than at present, for each author seems to have enlarged on what interested her most, to the exclusion sometimes of much more important information. On the principle of writing below a picture ‘This is a Lion,’ the editor informs us that the result is in his opinion ‘homogeneous’; but I fear that few readers would be found entirely to agree with him. To an outsider nothing appears so marked in the volume as its extreme inequality, some of the essays (notably those of Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. William Grey) being about as good as they could be made, while others possess practically no value at all.”

Nevertheless, Jex-Blake warmly praises some of the book's chapters, including Cobbe's introduction before she takes issue with Hoggan's chapter, writing:

Considering how very marked a battle has been fought and won in this field, and how greatly (as Mrs. Grey remarks) it has influenced the general issue, it seems more than unfortunate that a lady should be selected for its chronicler who, from her own showing, took no part whatever either in the memorable struggle at Edinburgh, where the seed of victory was sown in tears to be reaped in joy in the final opening of the University of London, nor in the subsequent foundation and working of the London School of Medicine for Women, to which is due all the facilities now enjoyed for medical study.⁴⁸⁷

She critiques George directly, writing of the "singularly inaccurate criticism from her husband's pen of what he and she consider the 'failure' in Edinburgh. She takes on Hoggan's credibility as an author directly when she writes:

The opinions of a well meaning young man, of small judicial capacity, who was himself a medical student at Edinburgh at the time, will hardly be considered by most readers so conclusive as he seems to think, even if they have no further knowledge of the *dessous des cartes*, and are not able to detect the special inaccuracies which, for instance, vitiate his narrative respecting the Hope Scholarship, and which will be seen at once on comparing his account with almost any of the newspapers of the day, (March and April, 1870). It is certainly to be regretted that such a paper should ever have found admittance into a volume aspiring to historical value.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

It is noteworthy here that Jex-Blake not only critiques Hoggan's "judicial capacity" - she also points to the "special inaccuracies" that "vitiate his narrative respecting the Hope Scholarship." It is also noteworthy that she directs the reader to "any of the newspapers of the day" since as we have seen, so much of what was contained within them was in fact penned or influenced by her. Jex-Blake's note that the Hoggans' text was to be regretted in part because it aspired to "historical value" again reflects her concern with the historical record and her forward-thinking way of approaching that.

A few weeks later Hoggan's reply was published in the *Academy*, defending in particular his narrative of the Hope Scholarship. Hoggan begins by noting that he has learned of Jex-Blake's attempts to "vitiate [his] narrative of the Hope Scholarship."⁴⁸⁹ In it he claims to have stuck to the facts and to have only added details "which was not convenient for [Jex-Blake] to give, and which naturally lead to a very different appreciation of the wisdom of her action."⁴⁹⁰ He writes: "I submitted the proof of my contribution to eminent authorities in Edinburgh, who, were I at liberty to mention names, would be universally recognized as having special competence to detect any inaccuracy. The one of these best qualified to test my account of the Hope Scholarship reports of it: 'The facts are accurately stated.'"⁴⁹¹ Of course, Hoggan is omitting some important details from Brown's feedback here. As I have explained, Brown told Hoggan more than once that too much had been made of the Hope Scholarship, and yet in his letter Hoggan only refers to Crum's last line and omits the rest. Moreover, the only positive thing Brown said about Jex-Blake was that her actions in support of Pechey had been justified, yet Hoggan's chapter specifically claims that she erred in defending Pechey's right to the scholarship. Seemingly a bit carried away in the process of defending himself, Hoggan then

⁴⁸⁹ Hoggan, George. "The Woman Question in Europe." *The Academy*, October 25, 1884, 273.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

offers up the rather grandiose assertion that that there is no greater source than himself on both the Edinburgh riots and the students' feelings and claims that he knew "vastly more" about them than Jex-Blake herself:

My account of the riots and of the feeling of the students was based on my own personal knowledge. I happen to know more about them than any other man, and vastly more than Miss Jex-Blake, who got most of her information at second-hand from myself. In short, my object was to write a little bit of impartial history, for the sake of the lesson to be deduced from it and the opinions I have quoted in matters where I was not a principal convince me that I have succeeded.⁴⁹²

Not content to let it rest there, he attacks Jex-Blake once more:

[Jex-Blake's] talents, unfortunately, like potent forces wrongly applied, only succeeded in wrecking the movement for want of the tact necessary in so difficult a position. A little of that gentleness and amiability which characterised some of her most estimable companions would have rendered the 'sowing of tears' in Edinburgh impossible, and the foundation of the London School of Medicine for Women unnecessary.⁴⁹³

Again, this is an implied comparison to Garrett and a gendered attack on Jex-Blake, which is then picked up by other scholars. Hoggan's core argument here is that if only Jex-Blake had been more "gentle" and "amiable," like Garrett and her followers, everything would have worked out perfectly. His note that the London School of Medicine for Women would have been unnecessary speaks to the belief that it was Jex-Blake's fault that women-only medical schools took root in Britain following the campaign.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

Jex-Blake's Preface to *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*

The exchange with George Hoggan was clearly on Jex-Blake's mind as she penned the updated Preface to her 1886 edition of *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* less than two years later.

It may be thought by some that I have dwelt at disproportionate length on the details of the struggle in Edinburgh and in particular have spared too much room in the Notes to quotations and opinions and literature of the hour. I have, however, done so deliberately, not only because I believe the events recorded to be of the class that truly 'make history,' but because I am very anxious to submit to the public as full a narrative as possible, and am content to abide by their judgment whether or no the so-called 'failure in Edinburgh' was due in whole or in part (as some have endeavored to maintain) either to the errors, or to the 'laches,' of those who carried on the warfare. My own opinion is that, properly speaking, there was no 'failure;' I believe that it was the seed sown in tears in Edinburgh that was reaped in joy elsewhere.⁴⁹⁴

In this passage, Jex-Blake refers directly to Hoggan when she quotes and responds to his assertion that she is to blame for the "failure at Edinburgh." Her comment that "the seed sown in tears in Edinburgh . . . was reaped in joy elsewhere" is a clear reassertion of her line in *The Academy* review, where she had written that "the seed of victory was sown in tears to be reaped in joy in the final opening of the University of London."⁴⁹⁵ By including this line, she also

⁴⁹⁴ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, viii.

⁴⁹⁵ Jex-Blake, Sophia. "The Woman Question in Europe." *The Academy*, Oct. 4, 1884, 209.

refutes Hoggan's response to her review in in *The Academy* in which he argues that a little "gentleness and amiability . . . would have rendered the 'sowing of tears' in Edinburgh impossible."⁴⁹⁶ Moreover, in promising the reader that her account is "accurate," she appeals to the authority of first-hand witnesses when she claims to have "submitted it in proof to no less than seven persons, --four women and three men-- who were all on the spot at the time of the struggle," perhaps in an effort to counter Hoggan's references to his own two sources.⁴⁹⁷ As she explains, she felt pressured to finish her book while the people who had witnessed these events were still alive and could confirm them: "I am anxious . . . that the story should be written as fully as necessary brevity will allow, while most of those concerned are still living, and can challenge or confirm my statements."⁴⁹⁸ It is evident that she revised *Medical Women* knowing that not only her future reputation, but the entire movement, could be impacted by others' negative perceptions of her. The second edition, then, was revised both as a rejoinder to critics like the Hoggans, and an attempt to set the record straight for posterity.

She also self-consciously and directly discusses her decision to devote significant time and space to "the literature of the hour," and explains that this choice was deliberate. Moreover, she self-consciously refers to her emphasis on the "literature of the hour" and looks ahead to the "judgment of the next generation," as though she is speaking directly to historians of the future:

I have taken a very considerable amount of additional trouble in order to give reference and authority, as far as possible, for all statements that may by any possibility be disputed, and I trust that I have so far succeeded in doing this that any reader having access to the newspapers, pamphlets, and other papers and

⁴⁹⁶ Hoggan, George. "The Woman Question in Europe." *The Academy*, October 25, 1884, 273.

⁴⁹⁷ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, viiii. Specifically, Jex-Blake explains that she submitted a draft of her section on the "Battle in Edinburgh" to seven people ("four women and three men") who were all present at the events she describes. Furthermore, each of these individuals confirmed that her work was completely true; none found any errors in it; and one of them ("a very eminent medical man") actually told her that, if anything, she had "softened the facts," rather than exaggerating them (viii).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

books referred to, might, without reading a line of my book, reconstruct for himself a story almost identical with that which I have told.⁴⁹⁹

Here Jex-Blake again uses some of the same language that she used in her response to Hoggan in *The Academy*, where she writes that Hoggan's "special inaccuracies" respecting the Hope Scholarship "will be seen at once on comparing his account with almost any of the newspapers of the day." In this passage she refers to her emphasis on "the literature of the hour" and notes that "any reader having access to the newspapers, pamphlets, and other papers and books referred to" will be able to reconstruct a version of the narrative that aligns with her own. In other words, Jex-Blake appeals to these outside sources as records of what really happened and urges readers to utilize them.

Here her use of the *Scotsman* as both a reference and a source of authority is made explicit; in fact, her preface and the inclusion of an extensive curated endnotes section suggests that she primarily viewed her revised 1886 edition of *Medical Women* as a vehicle for the elevation and preservation of these curated historical records. Throughout *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Jex-Blake expresses her concern that a false narrative of the medical women's campaign would be told to future generations. As Jex-Blake explains, these references to periodicals were deliberately chosen. She tells readers that she hoped that this text would be "the means of drawing attention" to this other information, the periodicals and newspapers that she painstakingly compiled and referenced for her reader, in the hope that they would be remembered and used to create accurate narratives in the future. In addition, she used the periodicals as sources of authority – a means of delivering scathing criticism that she did not feel comfortable including in the narrative itself. Jex-Blake is clear about her goals for this important

⁴⁹⁹ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, viii.

text. Despite the fact that she had been the central figure in the campaign and was an established physician in 1886 when the revised version of her book containing the notes and preface was published, she believed that readers would continue to distrust and challenge her narrative, making her appeals to external “reference and authority” essential.

At one point she even goes so far as to suggest that the struggle for women’s medical education could be erased altogether:

For the encouragement of those who have to undertake similar conflicts in the future, it may be worth while that some record should be kept of this contest, as otherwise it is more than probable that a few years hence we may be told that no one ever objected to the admission of women to the medical profession!⁵⁰⁰

This passage again emphasizes Jex-Blake’s future-focused perspective; she is hyper aware of the importance of creating a record in part because it is important for others to be aware. This comment brings to mind Jex-Blake’s 1862 letter to the *Scotsman*, written many years before she ever considered medicine as a profession for women, when she wrote of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson’s efforts to gain admission to the University of Edinburgh: “Probably the next generation will find it hard to realise how much they owe to those who at the present moment lend their influence and support to the infancy of a movement which they will see established in its prime.”⁵⁰¹ She includes a similar reflection in her 1872 version of *Medical Women* as well, where she writes of her own campaign: “I have brought down as clearly and as briefly as I have been able the history of this great struggle to the present moment, for that it is a great struggle, and one that will astound most of those who may read these lines some thirty years hence I think no thoughtful person will deny.”⁵⁰² Such references to the views of those in the future occur with

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., viii.

⁵⁰¹ *Scotsman*, Tuesday, June 17, 1862.

⁵⁰² Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: Two Essays*.

great frequency in Jex-Blake's writing throughout her life, and it is evident that after the campaign her tendency to think in these terms inspired great concern about the way the 1870s campaign and her role in it would be represented to future generations.

It appears that the Hoggan chapter amplified these concerns and motivated Jex-Blake into action, prompting her to revise and expand *Medical Women* despite what she describes as the "considerable difficulty" of doing so "in the intervals available in the course of a busy professional life."⁵⁰³ Jex-Blake's comment that it was "more than probable" that within a few years people might go so far as to claim that "no one ever objected" to the admission of women could also be a direct response to the Hoggan chapter. After all, Hoggan certainly moves the narrative in this direction when he falsely claims that all of the Edinburgh professors were supportive of the female students at first and only became neutral and later obstructive as a result of Jex-Blake's actions. It would not have been much of a stretch to have imagined a more extreme version of the story in which no objection to medical women ever existed at all.

The Scotsman in Medical Women: A Thesis and a History

Throughout *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Jex-Blake cites, quotes, paraphrases, and discusses many of the *Scotsman's* leading articles that we now know she authored herself while actively working to conceal her identity as the author of the pieces. One of many strategies Jex-Blake employed was to use newspaper excerpts to clarify or affirm potentially controversial passages. For example, early in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a*

⁵⁰³ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, vii.

History when she is introducing Sir Robert Christison, Jex-Blake declines to criticize him in her own voice within the narrative. Instead, she claims to be reluctant to name him at all:

I am anxious, as far as possible, to avoid personalities in this matter, and yet, I think, I cannot properly tell my story without explaining at the outset that, in my opinion at least, the whole opposition to the medical education of women was, in Edinburgh, directed by one man and his followers. It is hardly necessary to say that that man was Sir Robert Christison.⁵⁰⁴

While she deliberately makes it appear as though Christison's name has been dragged out of her in the narrative, this is clearly a performance designed to affirm herself as a narrator who finds such direct personal attacks distasteful. At the end of this passage Jex-Blake includes a lengthy footnote in which she begins by praising the *Scotsman* directly:

On this point I may quote the following passage from the *Scotsman*, whose great influence has always been most nobly exerted in this question on the side of justice and liberality, and to whose help, in a rousing the moral sense of the community, we owe a debt that we can never hope to pay.⁵⁰⁵

In this footnote, her first in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* that includes a *Scotsman* reference, Jex-Blake praises the *Scotsman* directly. Here Jex-Blake frames the *Scotsman* as a champion of justice and liberality and - importantly - a helper to the female students. She specifically refers to their "help," and the "debt" that the female students feel to the *Scotsman* before including a reference to a passage that in all likelihood she wrote herself. Of course, while the reader is meant to assume that this means the *Scotsman* helped the female students via supportive articles, we now know that they actually helped by allowing Jex-Blake a platform

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁵⁰⁵ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 74.

from which to share her own writing. In addition, her note here is interesting because it touches on the importance of changing the minds of members of the public, whose “moral sense” was roused by the *Scotsman*’s intervention. The *Scotsman* receives direct praise at multiple points in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, obviously in an attempt to bolster its authority. In none of these examples does Jex-Blake claim that she herself was writing for the *Scotsman*. This circle of the production of rhetorical authority is vital.

This framing is followed by a long excerpt from a *Scotsman* leader that was in all likelihood written by Jex-Blake herself in which Christison is introduced as “Dr. Christison, who is well known to be in truth the very soul and centre of the opposition.”⁵⁰⁶ Employing the same strategy that Jex-Blake often utilized in her leaders, which is to directly challenge the ostensible rationale the medical men provided by describing what she believed to be their actual motives, she describes Christison’s “farcical” assertion that he would be glad to provide assistance to the ladies: “[I]n spite of his verbal gallantry, [Christison] has flatly refused either to instruct them himself or facilitate arrangements by which anyone can do so in his place.”⁵⁰⁷ Throughout *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Jex-Blake uses footnotes and endnotes whenever she wants to include information that she imagines the public would not find palatable coming from her, or when she wants to appeal to a greater authority for her claims. What we now know is that in so doing, she is actually quoting herself.

It is telling that many biographers have chosen to emphasize and quote the very excerpts from *The Scotsman* that Jex-Blake herself includes in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. For example, in her discussion of the aforementioned leader, Catriona Blake writes: “The *Scotsman* condemned the professor’s claim that he would do anything to help the women as

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

‘farcical.’”⁵⁰⁸ And in her biography of Jex-Blake, Roberts quotes a passage from an earlier 1872 leader, which she frames by noting: “The *Scotsman* was scathing.”⁵⁰⁹ One interesting thing about these examples is how much of Jex-Blake’s deliberate influence is evident in the very fact that these excerpts from her leaders were republished and attributed to the *Scotsman*, where they say the things that Jex-Blake ostensibly could not say herself. In part this is due to a lack of archival material, but I believe it has occurred in large part because of how Jex-Blake chose to utilize and discuss the *Scotsman* leaders in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, and as such, subsequent scholars’ use of this material is evidence of the effectiveness of her strategy, which amplified her ideas while separating them from her own complicated reputation. These examples illustrate that Jex-Blake was able to not only use her anonymous *Scotsman* leaders to authoritatively make her point in 1872 and amplify it again in 1886, but also that she managed to influence what scholars writing over a century later would say about her and how they would amplify her message by appealing to the same source of authority.

Occasionally, Jex-Blake seems to slip in more than she meant to reveal. For example, in one *Scotsman* footnote following Jex-Blake’s reference to some extremely offensive circulars that were distributed during the campaign, she writes a framing statement for a *Scotsman* letter condemning the circulars in which she states: “A number of letters appeared in the papers protesting vehemently against ‘this vile circular,’ and one gentleman (a total stranger to us) wrote...”⁵¹⁰ The frame is followed by a quote from a letter signed “HOUSEHOLDER NO. 2.”⁵¹¹ Jex-Blake’s reference to a gentleman who was “a total stranger to us” begs the question - who is the “us” that she is referring to? The letter was signed “HOUSEHOLDER NO. 2,” and no name

⁵⁰⁸ Blake, Catriona. *The Charge of the Parasols*, 142.

⁵⁰⁹ Roberts, Shirley. *Sophia Jex-Blake*, 122.

⁵¹⁰ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 97.

⁵¹¹ Ibid. The quoted letter is from the *Scotsman* Friday, December 23, 1870.

is provided in the *Scotsman* itself, so there would have been no reason for the average *Scotsman* reader to have known the identity of the writer. It seems likely that in this line Jex-Blake was referring to herself, Russel, and others at the *Scotsman* who did not know the identity of the letter-writer when the letter appeared at the *Scotsman* office.

Later in the narrative Jex-Blake praises Russel again. When writing of three men who helped her the most, she briefly lists the Lord Provost of Edinburgh (William Law), Professor David Masson, and “Mr. Alexander Russel, Editor of the *Scotsman* whose advocacy was literally beyond all price in those days, when our one hope and our great difficulty was to get the real truth laid fully and fearlessly before the public.”⁵¹² Here she even includes a footnote to double down on this statement in which she quotes a passage from *Memoirs of Adam Black*: “The *Scotsman*, then edited by the ablest of all editors of his time, Alexander Russel, and more truly representing the best thought of *Scotsman* and its capital than any or all of the other papers.”⁵¹³ This time Jex-Blake praises Russel in her narrative and then uses her footnotes to bolster this praise with additional layers of authority. She clearly gives Russel the credit for supporting her in the *Scotsman* and emphasizes the importance of the *Scotsman* in shaping public opinion - her “one hope and great difficulty.” While there is no reason to doubt that Jex-Blake sincerely appreciated Russel’s support (despite her disappointment with him when he married one of the female students in the middle of the Edinburgh campaign), the effect of this passage is clearly to suggest or leave open the possibility that he was responsible for the pieces supporting her campaign. Doing so is clearly an appeal to the credibility of the many *Scotsman* citations she includes in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*.

⁵¹² Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 104.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

Jex-Blake also used footnotes occasionally to provide satirical comment on the situation. At one point in her narrative she explains that there were numerous occasions upon which the women were told on the eve of an examination that they would be blocked from taking it, and Jex-Blake was forced to seek counsel and fight for the right to take the examination. After telling the story of one such incident, she notes that the women all passed the examination despite the extremely stressful circumstances immediately preceding it and adds a *Scotsman* reference in a footnote:

On a subsequent very similar occasion the *Scotsman* remarked: “It may be noticed that this is the third time that startling announcements have been fired at the lady students on the very eve of important Examinations, possibly with the professional view of testing the soundness of their nerves.”⁵¹⁴

The fact that the *Scotsman* reported this detail immediately after it happened, and with Jex-Blake’s characteristic wit, makes me wonder whether she was in fact the author of this news brief. In any case, it satirizes the motivations of the male medical faculty by joking that by making this announcement to the female students multiple times the medical school was probably just taking a “professional view” and testing their nerves when that was clearly not their reason for doing so.

In another example Jex-Blake writes of the Infirmary Meeting of 1872 and describes the medical faculty’s attempt to block firms from voting. In her narrative she ridicules the medical men for this decision: “It occurred to the defeated party that here might be found a straw for them, drawing, to catch at,—that possibly a legal objection might be sustained against the votes of firms which were so largely in our favour, and that, if so, the victory might yet be secured!”⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 118.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 125-6.

This passage is followed by a footnote that leads to an excerpt from one of Jex-Blake's 1872 leaders. The excerpt begins: "It matters nothing that firms had only voted since the Infirmary was founded . . . The firms had voted in favour of the ladies, and the firms must go, if at least the law would (as it probably would not) bear out the medical men in their reckless endeavor to expel them."⁵¹⁶ Here Jex-Blake does mock the physicians in her narrative and points out the absurdity of their actions, but she supports her statement with a long excerpt from her leader, which she attributes to "*Scotsman*, January 29, 1872" without giving any indication that she in fact had written it. The leader attacks the decision of the medical men and condemns their actions as a "reckless endeavor."

Having bolstered her claim with the *Scotsman* citation, Jex-Blake takes it up a notch in the following paragraph of her narrative, where she writes:

Instances have occurred before now where personal feelings have triumphed over public interests, but I do not think that I ever heard of quite so reckless a course as this, by which the medical clinic plunged the great Edinburgh Hospital into litigation, and that with some of its own most generous supporters, rather than allow a dozen women to obtain in its wards the instruction that the Contributors had decreed they should receive!⁵¹⁷

In this section, which follows her citation of the *Scotsman* leader in the footnotes, Jex-Blake criticizes the medical men using the same word - reckless - that was used in the *Scotsman* leader in a reference to the medical men's "reckless endeavor" to expel the women.⁵¹⁸ This gives the impression that she is only repeating what the *Scotsman* has said, rather than using the word on her own. It is also notable that the use of the word "reckless" explains the men's actions in terms

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 126.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 126-7.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 126.

of irrational personal feelings, which flips an argument that was frequently used to criticize Jex-Blake back onto them. Again, after explaining in her narrative that the “Edinburgh clique” had driven the hospital to litigation rather than allow “a dozen women” to obtain instruction in the Infirmary, she directs the reader to a second footnote that refers to the same *Scotsman* leader again: “They have recklessly hurled the chief hospital of Scotland on the spikes of fierce controversy, and not for any object or purpose connected with their own interests, but solely because in their resolute defence of their profession against the desecration of female invasion, the Infirmary formed a convenient earthwork behind which to entrench themselves.”⁵¹⁹ Again, the word reckless is used to describe the medical men. While Jex-Blake stops short in her narrative from claiming that it was to protect their profession that they barred the female students, she allows the *Scotsman* leader to say that for her. The fact that Jex-Blake herself is so often described as “reckless” by modern critics is worth noting in itself.

In another long quotation, this time within the narrative itself, Jex-Blake quotes one of her own 1872 leaders at length. The inclusion of this long quotation within the narrative is interesting. In this section of the narrative, she explains why in 1872 after a full year of obstruction and no other paths to take, the women chose to do “the one thing that remained for us to do” and brought an action of declarator against the University Senatus asking to have it stated that the University had to allow the female students to complete their educations.⁵²⁰ Jex-Blake is eager to emphasize that the female students did not make this choice on their own. As she explains, “we had the very widely spread and daily increasing sympathy of the public at large” as well as friends who offered to help because they recognized that “our opponents stood in high

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 127.

⁵²⁰ Jex-Blake, Sophia. *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, 141-2. In Scottish law an action of declarator aims to “have some right, status, etc., judicially ascertained.”

places and were relentless in their aims and reckless in their means.”⁵²¹ In a further effort to bolster the women’s cause she notes that “we had no less authority than that of the Lord Advocate of Scotland for believing that we were absolutely entitled to what we had so humbly solicited.”⁵²² Here the female students are presented as humble and deserving of protection and in need of help from stronger authorities in an apparent effort to appease critics who might challenge Jex-Blake for pursuing this course of action. It is in this context that she writes of the action of declarator, directly appealing to the *Scotsman*’s authority once more - this time within the narrative itself - to frame a passage from her own leader:

By this action it would be decided--once more to quote our great champion the *Scotsman*--whether, indeed, “a university can, with formal solemnity, and with the concurrence of all its component parts, decree the admission of women to study for the profession of medicine, and then deny them access to those means by which alone they can enter that profession; whether, indeed, a university is absolved from all duties towards such of its matriculated students as may have the misfortune to be women. It would have to be decided whether any corporate body can make a contract of which all the obligations are on one side, and can exact fees and demand obedience to regulations, without in its turn incurring any responsibility; and can at pleasure finally send empty away those whose presence is inconvenient, without any regard to the money and time and labor which they have expended, and simple reliance upon its good faith.”⁵²³

⁵²¹ Ibid., 141. Here Jex-Blake again uses the word “reckless” to describe her opponents, repeating the word that she first employs in a quotation of her *Scotsman* leader.

⁵²² Ibid., 141.

⁵²³ Ibid. The passage quoted in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* is from Jex-Blake’s *Scotsman* leader of March 25, 1872.

Before quoting this lengthy passage from her leader of March 25, 1872, Jex-Blake again makes a direct appeal to the *Scotsman*'s authority, this time referring to it simply as "our great champion, the *Scotsman*." Here she positions the *Scotsman* as a champion of the female students, suggesting that the paper - and by extension, its male editor and employees - took a stand and fought for the rights of the female students. It is of course ironic that the passage that follows comes from her own pen, and that it was in fact she who was in a sense her own and the other women's champion. By crediting this role to the *Scotsman*, Jex-Blake suggests that she and the other female students were in need of help and support. This brings to mind some of her rhetoric in the *Scotsman* leaders, where she employed a rhetoric of protection when it supported her argument.

Representations of Jex-Blake in Modern Scholarship

In their character assessments of Jex-Blake, modern scholars have at times recapitulated the biases of their sources, while at other points they seem to have followed precisely the steps Jex-Blake laid out for them. For example, Gillian Darley casually refers to Jex-Blake's "impossible temperament."⁵²⁴ Anne Crowther and Marguerite Dupree describe her as "impetuous" and compare her unfavorably with the "circumspect" Garrett Anderson.⁵²⁵ And Oliver Lovesey matter-of-factly discusses "the destructive effect of Jex-Blake's personality," which was increasingly "imperious, abrasive, authoritarian, even autocratic, and always impulsive."⁵²⁶ Such descriptions of Jex-Blake originate in biases that filtered into contemporary accounts of Jex-Blake and were later reproduced in scholarship. For example, Hoggan's

⁵²⁴ Darley, Gillian. *Octavia Hill: Social Reformer and Founder of the National Trust*.

⁵²⁵ Crowther, Anne et al. *Medical Lives*, 153.

⁵²⁶ Lovesey, Oliver. "Introduction," *Victorian Social Activists' Novels: Volume 4*, 2011, p. 4.

assertion that Garrett Anderson was superior to Jex-Blake because of her “tact” and patience, and Brown’s belief that the female students should have approached their educations as “favors,” are embedded into contemporary sources. Many of them have then been reproduced without question or investigation into their origins.

In citing such examples, I want to be clear that I do not wish to oversimplify these scholarly projects by reducing them to such descriptions of Jex-Blake. I recognize and acknowledge that all of the texts I cite and discuss in this section contain valuable insights and have been composed by respected scholars who have produced a great deal of quality work on a variety of subjects. My intention is only to challenge one aspect of the scholarship as it pertains to Jex-Blake by focusing on a pattern that is remarkably widespread and by no means limited to the works included here. Moreover, I do not mean to err in the other direction by claiming that all scholars have represented Jex-Blake in the same way. They have not.⁵²⁷ Also, I do not want to imply that Jex-Blake was a superhuman being who never made a mistake or possessed any character flaws. Jex-Blake herself wrote about her perceived flaws throughout her life and, like most of us, was probably her own harshest critic. I am just pointing out some obvious facts that have too frequently been ignored in accounts of Jex-Blake’s life; namely, that what counts as a character flaw is in large part defined by one’s time, gender, social class, and more, and specifically, that many descriptions of Jex-Blake are reductive to a problematic degree.

It is important to emphasize this last point because the kinds of labels that are hastily applied to Jex-Blake in so many historical accounts oversimplify who she was and obscure our understanding and appreciation of her contributions and impact. Again, it may seem obvious, but

⁵²⁷ For example, critics like Edyth Lutzker, Catriona Blake, and Kristine Swenson have provided assessments of Jex-Blake that are generally less critical and have focused on praising her ability to publicize the campaign.

many of the things that Jex-Blake has been criticized for, such as her refusal to accept what she saw as an unjust system or her willingness to publicly fight for her beliefs despite powerful opposition, would likely have been seen in a more positive light if she had been a man. They are also precisely the kinds of qualities that subsequent feminists would seek out to praise.

Moreover, the fact that she did not present in a conventionally feminine way and that she was involved in intimate relationships with other women likely had an impact on others' perceptions of her as well.⁵²⁸ In such cases, I believe it is more rational to criticize the system that placed judgment upon her, rather than judging Jex-Blake herself for not conforming to that system in ways more befitting a Victorian woman of her social position. Reproducing and recirculating Victorian stereotypes as facts is not only unfair to Jex-Blake; it is also problematic because it obscures our understanding of the campaign and women's roles at the time.

While this is a large subject that I will not do justice to here, I want to note that it was not only Jex-Blake's enemies but also her closest friends who provided the sources for many of the aforementioned descriptions of her. They wrote their own biases into their accounts of her life and character, often while aiming to concede what were at that time widely held beliefs about Jex-Blake's character in order to make the audience more receptive to new information that painted her in a more favorable light.⁵²⁹ To take the most influential example, Todd's *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, to this day the most detailed account of Jex-Blake's life, describes her in many

⁵²⁸ John Blackwood to Charles Reade, March 30, 1876. National Library of Scotland Special Collections. One example of this can be seen in John Blackwood's letter to Charles Reade. Reade based *A Woman Hater*'s central character, Rhoda Gale, whose attraction to women is central to the story, on Jex-Blake. While preparing to write *A Woman Hater*, which was originally serialized in Blackwood's, Reade interviewed Jex-Blake and accessed her personal archive. Blackwood himself was well aware that the character was based on Jex-Blake, and writing to Reade of the novel, he implicitly refers to Jex-Blake when he notes: "There are of course bad men among the Physicians as in every other profession but as a body medical men are justly esteemed and I suspect young girls would be better in their hands than in those of strong minded women."

⁵²⁹ While Todd and Jex-Blake seem to have enjoyed a long, mutually respectful relationship, there are many indications of their own differences in temperament and personality in the historical record. For example, Jex-Blake wished that Todd would use "Dr." when describing herself. After all, she had earned it! Todd disagreed and refused. Todd also makes a number of "concessions" about Jex-Blake's character flaws in *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*. While it does seem that Jex-Blake's strong personality frustrated her at times, it is often unclear how much of Todd's descriptions of Jex-Blake are employed as concessions to an audience that would have already seen them as a priori facts. After all, her overall aim is to uplift Jex-Blake. For an excellent essay on Todd's navigation of Jex-Blake's personality and her recognition of her audience, see "Writing the Life of Jex-Blake" by Kristine Swenson.

of the same terms as her harshest critics: hasty, impulsive, and imperious are all words that Todd uses multiple times in her descriptions of Jex-Blake. However, when modern accounts of Jex-Blake reduce her to these terms in their descriptions of her character, they simplify their source material.

In considering this subject, there are a couple of key points to keep in mind. First, I do not argue that Jex-Blake did not possess any of the qualities mentioned above; I simply believe that such qualities are often exaggerated because of her time, class, and gender and that they are emphasized disproportionately while other qualities and behaviors are minimized. It is obvious that Jex-Blake was disproportionately “punished” for exhibiting certain characteristics, such as strong will and an occasionally passionate temper, because she was a woman. Limiting Jex-Blake to these descriptions reduces her to a two-dimensional stereotype and does not do justice to her personal complexity or her professional contributions.

Second, it is important to note that Todd was writing with particular aims and that her way of being was in many ways different from Jex-Blake’s, both of which contributed to her representation of her friend and partner. At this time the best account of Todd’s composition of *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* is a 1999 article by Kristine Swenson.⁵³⁰ As Swenson explains, Todd’s primary goal in composing the book was to “reclaim a controversial public figure.”⁵³¹ She wrote with the awareness that Jex-Blake’s “difficult” and “unconventional” nature was “a matter of public record” and aimed to “create a rounder, more sympathetic figure with tales from her personal life.”⁵³² While there is plenty of evidence in *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* that at times Jex-Blake’s personal characteristics were lamented by those around her - and more than one hint that there were aspects of her personality that Todd struggled with on a personal level -

⁵³⁰ See Swenson, Kristine. “Intimate Sympathy and Self-Effacement: Writing the Life of Sophia Jex-Blake.”

⁵³¹ Ibid., 225.

⁵³² Ibid.

the primary audience that Todd envisioned as she composed her text would have seen Jex-Blake's flaws as givens. In this context, many of Todd's descriptions of them are actually concessions that proceed her main argument, which was that Jex-Blake was much greater and much more than these qualities suggest. As such, these concessions are often followed by details that complicate Jex-Blake's character and aim to present her in a more favorable light.

For example, after describing Jex-Blake's headstrong ways as a child and her mother's attempts to tame her into a gentle, pious Victorian girl ("You can hardly believe how happy you will be when through God's help upon your earnest endeavors, you can obey at once and give up your own way," her mother writes in one of many letters aimed at limiting her daughter's "will" and promoting "obedience"), Todd contributes her own reflection: "If she could have gone to a boys' school and enjoyed its boisterous give and take, the little 'despotic emperor' would soon have found her level."⁵³³ Here Todd contributes a counter narrative to the one that blames Jex-Blake and her flaws for these issues; the key problem in Todd's view is the gendered educational system in which Jex-Blake was placed, where her personal strengths were not valued or nurtured as they would have been if she had been sent to a boy's school. In another section after describing a series of incidents in which Jex-Blake was accused of creating conflicts with authority figures in her youth, Todd notes that despite these flare ups: "Big emergencies always braced her. She never lost her temper with a horse, nor her presence of mind in an accident."⁵³⁴ After acknowledging the undeniable fact that many of the students at Jex-Blake's Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women rejected her heavy handed approach, Todd notes that "a little band of juniors who in some measure understood her, who responded to her ideals, who were proud to assist her and to reckon themselves her disciples," also existed in the school alongside

⁵³³ Todd Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 8, 9.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

her critics. And in describing Jex-Blake's refusal to accept the University's assessment of her 1872 examinations, which she failed, Todd again concedes that Jex-Blake was "hasty, impulsive, faulty," but immediately follows this up with the claim that she was also magnanimous, noble, and willing to hear opposing arguments when they were given in good faith:

It is a terrible thing for a hasty, impulsive, faulty human being to be placed as S. J.-B. was at this time, in a difficult position—on a slippery ridge, as it were—in the eye of the whole world. It has been said before that few people ventured to "lecture" her: she liked to hear the truth, and, when her friends were prepared to risk all, she took their faithful dealing magnanimously, often nobly: but somehow she made adverse criticism very difficult. It was said of her that she would have made an excellent advocate,—she had so keen an eye for the strong points of her own position and the weak points of those of her adversaries; and it is only fair to say that, in conversation with her, many people might well be simply carried away.

Again, here Todd concedes Jex-Blake's perceived flaws, but she quickly follows this up by noting her strengths: Jex-Blake received challenges to her ideas "magnanimously, often nobly" even as she made such criticism difficult because of her skill as an advocate for any position she defended and also because those around her apparently lacked either the nerve or the knowledge to effectively challenge her. As Todd implies, the very qualities that created conflict in her personal life would have been powerful assets in another role, as an advocate. (Indeed in another section of the book Todd quotes from one of Jex-Blake's early journal entries from before she chose to pursue medicine in which she notes that while she believed she was meant for teaching, her "powers and will" might have made her a better fit for the legal profession: "[I]f I had been

an American, I believe I should not have doubted to be a lawyer.”) Again, there is much more that could be said on this topic, but my point is that when importing descriptive words from primary sources into modern scholarship, I think it is important to view them in context, where they are often complicated.

The ironic thing here is that in writing these concessions into her text and then burning all of Jex-Blake’s papers, making hers the authoritative text on Jex-Blake’s life, Todd might have actually perpetuated the more critical descriptions of Jex-Blake in ways she had not intended. Then again, she cannot be held entirely responsible for what future writers chose to highlight and amplify and what they chose to ignore.

Thomas Bonner’s use of the Hoggan chapter in his account of the Edinburgh campaign

Thomas Bonner’s *To the Ends of the Earth: Women’s Search for Education in Medicine* (1992) is an oft cited comparative history on women’s efforts to enter the medical profession. Here Bonner, a celebrated and influential scholar who was “one of the leading medical historians of his generation” aims to trace the opening of the first universities to women in the 1860s and 1870s.⁵³⁵ In his chapter on “The Fight for Coeducation in Britain,” Bonner includes a section on “The Battle of Edinburgh.”⁵³⁶ In this chapter Bonner draws from the Hoggan chapter to a considerable degree in his discussion of Jex-Blake, whom he first describes as “fiery, determined, and enormously self- confident” with “quick intelligence, inexhaustible energy, and abrasive personality.” As a result, over the past few decades the Hoggan chapter has indirectly

⁵³⁵ Lurie, Edward. “In Memoriam: Thomas Neville Bonner.” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 1.

⁵³⁶ Bonner, Thomas. *To the Ends of the Earth*, 125. Like many scholars, Bonner uses a variation of Jex-Blake’s section heading, “The Battle of Edinburgh,” as his overview to this section.

influenced a great deal of scholarship on Jex-Blake because so many writers have utilized and cited Bonner's account of the campaign.

In his overview of contemporary views on Jex-Blake's character from "those who knew her" Bonner cites four people. Notably, only one of these examples, from the famous surgeon Louisa Martindale, who called Jex-Blake "a splendid leader," is flattering. The Martindale compliment is immediately followed up with three negative quotations from Elizabeth Blackwell ("a dangerous woman from her power and want of tact"), Elizabeth Garrett ("overpowering . . . [with] some peculiarities which do not quite harmonize with my own"), and Francis Minot ("stormy, tumultuous, and unmanageable"). It seems evident from the start that Bonner will be giving more weight to negative assessments of Jex-Blake than positive ones, of which he might have selected many for a more balanced view.⁵³⁷

Bonner's alignment with the Hoggan article is evident in two primary ways: the overall narrative of his story about the Edinburgh campaign and specifically in his account of the Hope Scholarship incident, which culminates with Bonner's blatant claim that he aligns himself with Frances Hoggan, though he refers to her by her maiden name, Frances Elizabeth Morgan. While Bonner does acknowledge that Thomas Laycock, Robert Christison, and others had emerged as the "strongest foes" of the female students prior to the spring of 1870, implicitly contradicting Hoggan's depiction of harmonious, supportive professors in the months leading up to the Hope

⁵³⁷ Some of this bias can be seen in Bonner's use of otherwise "friendly" sources as well. For example, in one section of his book, Bonner describes Jex-Blake's appearance at the Infirmary Meeting of 1871, where she "told several hundred hearers" that Christison's assistant played a key role in the riot and was then "promptly sued for libel by the assistant." In this section Bonner draws from another source, quoting directly from Edythe Lutzker's account of the campaign: "It took no more than a day or two for the whole country to know . . . that her impulsiveness had plunged the little group, and especially Sophia, into a head-on collision with the law." Again, here a source, this time a book from the 1960s, is picked up and cited uncritically. While I personally admire Lutzker, an excellent scholar who began graduate school at fifty years of age and went on to write numerous pioneering historical accounts of the medical women's campaign in the decades that followed, I find it disappointing that Bonner does not push back against the idea that Jex-Blake was to blame for the outrageous lawsuit that was filed in retaliation for this truthful public assertion. In all likelihood, the lawsuit was also inspired by the fact that Jex-Blake got the better of Christison during their verbal exchange at the same meeting and made him look foolish. Nor does Bonner take the time to explain that the trial itself, while quite the ordeal for Jex-Blake and the female students, ultimately won them a great deal of public support from people who saw the trial for the sham it was, including major figures who had previously not taken a stand on the issue. The end result was the formation of a Committee for Securing Complete Medical Education to Women in Edinburgh, which went on to play an important role in securing public support for the cause.

Scholarship affair, he aligns with Hoggan's narrative in most respects. As Bonner puts it, "Against her own better judgment, Pechey was persuaded by Jex-Blake to appeal the decision . . . Newspapers, journals, and politicians alike joined in the attack on the university and the hapless professor who had made the award." In this passage, Bonner claims without citing any evidence that Pechey had been persuaded by Jex-Blake "against her better judgment" and refers to Brown as the "hapless" professor, echoing Hoggan's narrative in which Jex-Blake pushed the decision on everyone, and Brown was victimized.⁵³⁸ As in the original source, no effort is made to interrogate Brown's role in the event, nor to question the logic of his decision to award the Hope Scholarship to a male student and the part he played behind the scenes when he turned against the female students and encouraged others to do so.

Bonner also appears to refer to the Hoggan chapter when he writes that "one friend of the women's cause opined that 'their ambition and brilliancy put the cause back fifty years.'" As Hoggan put it in the 1874 chapter: "The question which, judiciously conducted, might have had a favorable solution within five years, was thrown back 50 years further in Edinburgh than any other medical school of the three kingdoms."⁵³⁹ How Hoggan came up with that number is unclear since the "50 years" refers to a future in an alternative timeline that never came into existence.

The most problematic part of Bonner's narrative is the section where he directly aligns himself with the Hoggan chapter. Like Hoggan, Bonner focuses not on the opening of the London School of Medicine for Women nor the passage of the Enabling Bill, but rather the fact that women continued to study in separate schools apart from men for some time: "[N]early two decades would pass before another woman would study medicine with men in Great Britain. No

⁵³⁸ Bonner, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 127.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 75

British university would consider taking the women of Edinburgh into its student body.” Like Hoggan, Bonner places the majority of the blame for this fact on Jex-Blake’s shoulders: “All of the other leaders of the women’s medical movement in Britain--Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Garrett, Frances Elizabeth Morgan--blamed Jex-Blake’s tactics and fiery temper for the failure at Edinburgh.” It is unclear what Bonner means by “all of the other leaders” of the movement since more than the four women he lists above fit into that category. In fact, two of the female students who knew Jex-Blake best countered this view. Despite some misgivings about Jex-Blake’s decision to challenge her exam results in *The Times* and open the Edinburgh school Isabel Thorne seemed to agree with Jex-Blake’s argument that the Edinburgh fight had helped facilitate progress: “Apparently we had failed completely in the object of our sojourn at Edinburgh, but time has proved that actually we had accomplished a great work by preparing the way for subsequent efforts, and by rousing public attention to the question.”⁵⁴⁰ And Dr. Edith Pechey, Jex-Blake’s fellow classmate and closest companion in Edinburgh, wrote in response to attacks on her friend and colleague: “All we have done in opening up the medical profession to women was mainly due to Sophia Jex-Blake, who had got all the abuse because she had done all the work” (94). Thus, in aligning with Hoggan’s account of the campaign, Bonner not only oversimplifies the story; he misses an opportunity to explore the judgments and stereotypes that might have led some of Jex-Blake’s contemporaries to place the blame on her shoulders.

Bonner’s most direct alignment with the Hoggan chapter appears toward the end of his narrative of the Hope Scholarship incident. After making the false claim that “all” of the other leaders of the movement in Britain aligned with the view that Jex-Blake was to blame for events

⁵⁴⁰ Thorne, *Sketch of the Foundation*, 16. While Thorne completed the entire course of medical study and became a leader at the London Hospital for Women and an active member of the British medical women’s movement, she never completed her examination to become a licensed physician.

in Edinburgh, Bonner quotes directly from Frances Hoggan's paragraph, which appears just before the Hoggan narrative in her chapter:

Had the same policy of unobtrusively working on, claiming no distinctions, and sedulously and quietly avoiding all occasions of rivalry between the sexes . . . been followed," wrote Morgan in 1884, "the results of the Edinburgh experiment was assured, and years of struggle, heart-burnings, injustice, and hope deferred might have been averted" . . . There was considerable justice in Morgan's charge. The struggle at Edinburgh left a bitter heritage in British medical circles that made further efforts at coeducation nearly impossible. Even when Scotland finally declared for women's higher education in 1889, the medical school in Edinburgh held out against mixed classes until the First World War.⁵⁴¹

At this point Bonner makes his alignment with the Hoggans explicit; he believes that there is "considerable justice" in their charge, and he elevates that narrative by not only giving it a central place in his chapter but also his personal stamp of approval. While he might have been aware that Frances Morgan was not actually a first-hand witness to events in Edinburgh, Bonner does not indicate his recognition of this fact in his book, nor does he mention that it was in fact George Hoggan who wrote the majority of the passages denouncing Jex-Blake. In focusing only on Frances Hoggan's brief contribution to the section on Jex-Blake's role in Edinburgh, Bonner, like the Hoggans, uses a contemporary female doctor's name to lend authority to his criticism of Jex-Blake even though the bulk of the criticism came from a male physician who aimed to discredit Jex-Blake. More than that, it is unclear why Hoggan - and Bonner by extension - are certain that "the results of the Edinburgh experiment" would have been "assured" if only Jex-

⁵⁴¹ Bonner, 129.

Blake had behaved more like Garrett. Unlike in Stansfeld's account, which unequivocally blames Christison and the University of Edinburgh for its treatment of the female students, Bonner chooses to align himself with the Morgans in this passage in blaming Jex-Blake. Moreover, he adds to the Hoggans' account the claim that "all" of the other leading medical women in Britain agreed with this, making it seem as though no one on the "inside" saw things from Jex-Blake's point of view.

Bonner does not outline supporting reasons for his claim that there is "considerable justice" in Morgan's decision to blame and identify Jex-Blake as the key force behind this "bitter heritage" as opposed to blaming, say, Sir Robert Christison, who, from his position of much greater professional and social power, single-handedly sabotaged many of Jex-Blake's hard-won victories and worked tirelessly to organize the medical community against her. Also, it is impossible to know for sure what the women's medical movement in Britain would have looked like if Jex-Blake had not "paved the way" in Edinburgh. Jex-Blake's most recent biographer Shirley Roberts, for example, believes that had it not been for Jex-Blake, women in Britain would have remained locked out of the profession for another 20 years.⁵⁴² The range of such guesses as to what would have happened in an alternate universe that did not contain Jex-Blake show that it is possible to consider these same facts and arrive at a different conclusion. While Bonner does note that the "dramatic publicity" afforded to Jex-Blake's struggle "gave rise to a new outbursts of interest in women's capacity for higher education in Great Britain," he does not directly acknowledge Jex-Blake's role in creating that publicity. He wraps up his chapter on Britain by quoting an unnamed "modern historian" who writes, "the backlash from the stormy

⁵⁴² Roberts, *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 4. For example, Jex-Blake's biographer Shirley Roberts writes: "Without [Jex-Blake's] courage and tenacity women would probably have been debarred from the practice of medicine for several more decades."

years of the Jex-Blake period discriminated most against the medical women students.”⁵⁴³ Why did his source refer to this as “the stormy years of the Jex-Blake period” and not “the stormy years of the anti-woman Christison period?”⁵⁴⁴ Unfortunately, this is never explained or addressed because questions like these are ignored throughout the chapter, as they are in a number of representations of Jex-Blake’s life and work.

Jex-Blake v. Garrett Anderson

Modern scholars frequently recapitulate the biases of their sources when they ask whether Jex-Blake or Garrett Anderson is more deserving of praise and recognition. Which pioneering female doctor had a greater impact on opening the campaign to women? Or, to reduce it to its simplest terms: Which woman was the best? Writers have been endlessly fascinated with these questions, and as I have explained, this debate originated in the nineteenth century when supporters of Garrett Anderson, like the Hoggans, argued that her approach was superior to Jex-Blake’s and thus more deserving of praise and recognition.

Claire Brock’s article, “Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and the Professionalism of Medical Publicity” (2008), which has been cited in numerous accounts of the medical women’s campaign, addresses this trend in the scholarship explicitly.⁵⁴⁵ As she explains:

⁵⁴³ Bonner, Thomas. *To the Ends of the Earth*, 131. Bonner’s reference for this quote notes “This information is derived from a variety of sources” before citing the following sources for this attribution: “Alumnae of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting 1900” and “Co-Education in Medical Colleges,” *Women’s Medical Journal*, 1901.

⁵⁴⁴ Side note: On Robert Christison’s Wikipedia page, there is a section entitled “Opposition to Woman Doctors” in which the writer notes, “His influence was largely responsible for the eventual decision taken by the University not to allow the women to graduate.” I do not know who edited this page and was responsible for that line, but given a long quotation from Stansfeld’s “Medical Women” that follows, it seems evident that the writer of that section was drawing upon Stansfeld’s account of the campaign. It is interesting how much of an impact a single primary source can have on the way a story is told.

⁵⁴⁵ Brock, Claire. “Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and the Professionalism of Medical Publicity,” 329. In fairness to Brock, I have come across some scholars, such as Catriona Blake, Shirley Roberts, and Rosemary Van Arsdel, who seem to admire Jex-Blake’s devotion to the larger cause and her willingness to sacrifice personal success for the greater good. Brock could be referencing them when she writes of the “bold, intrepid” Jex-Blake and the cautious, clinging Garrett Anderson. At times Blake and Roberts suggest that Garrett Anderson has received too much credit for her personal achievements. A fictionalized BBC miniseries centered on the campaign, *The Walls of Jericho*, comes close to representing the

When historians write about the two women, they oppose them in every respect. Garrett Anderson was ‘circumspect’, whereas Jex-Blake was ‘impetuous’; the former was ‘motherly,’ while the latter was ‘maidenly’ . . . Jex-Blake was a ‘fiery trail-blazer,’ but the self-effacing Garrett Anderson ‘hated to be the subject of personal curiosity and gossip’ . . . [T]he bold, intrepid Jex-Blake is viewed by historians as having deliberately courted danger . . . Garrett Anderson, however, remained in the shadows of her courageous, battling colleague, clinging on, cautiously, to the standard route.⁵⁴⁶

Having identified a series of stereotypes that frame the two women as binary opposites, Brock does not aim to challenge them but rather to argue that while these descriptions are essentially accurate, Garrett Anderson’s way of being was part of a deliberate strategy that was more complicated than it appears on the surface. Moreover, this strategy was superior to Jex-Blake’s impulsive, self-centered approach. Simply put, Jex-Blake is Garrett Anderson’s foil in this essay, and her failure is used to illustrate Garrett Anderson’s success. Brock introduces her foil with a questionable claim: “Jex-Blake has always been seen by historians as an effective publicist for the medical women’s cause.”⁵⁴⁷ At the same time, Brock is quick to note that it was not Jex-Blake but Garrett Anderson who was eventually made Dean of the London School of Medicine for Women despite the fact that Garrett Anderson originally thought the existence of a college for women only was problematic, and Jex-Blake was the one who founded the school. As Brock puts it: “Despite Jex-Blake’s fundamental role in founding the school in 1874 the managing company chose not to accept her as Honorary Secretary nor later as the Dean, a post that went to

two women in the two-dimensional way Brock describes, but it also contains a number of unrealistic elements. That being said, I believe this is an oversimplified account of how the women have been depicted.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 328-9.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 324.

‘reliable and successful’ Garrett Anderson in 1883 . . . the latter was less temperamentally difficult and clearly more appropriate as the acceptable public face of medical women.”⁵⁴⁸

Having defined her subjects, Brock then presents her thesis as an alternative to the dominant historical record: “[I]t was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson who convinced both the medical profession and the public of the value of women doctors.”⁵⁴⁹ She explains:

While Jex-Blake’s very public fight with the University of Edinburgh made good tales of derring-do, it did not stand her in equally important stead with her (male and female) colleagues, nor reflect well on her professionalism, a key factor in the achievement of medical renown in a century which had seen desperate attempts to elevate the social standing of the doctor . . . I will contend in this article that it was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson who convinced both the medical profession and the public of the value of women doctors, benefiting both her cause and, importantly, her own private reputation, without risking her professional status.⁵⁵⁰

After describing Jex-Blake’s efforts in Edinburgh as fodder for her “tales of derring-do,” Brock writes that while Garrett “appeared to subvert her sex beneath her profession,” she did so consciously to build a distinguished reputation and publicize women’s right to practice medicine.⁵⁵¹ She praises Garrett for knowing “the value of manipulating costume” and writes that like the suffragettes a half century later, Garrett Anderson “knew the importance of feminine appearance to counter accusations of the monstrous ‘peculiarities’ of women in public life.”⁵⁵²

While I appreciate Brock’s claim that Garrett Anderson strategically manipulated her public

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 337.

⁵⁵² Ibid, 330.

image to become “a contemporary icon” and enjoyed the aspects of the article that focused solely upon Garrett Anderson’s quite brilliant management of her public persona, I find it more than unfortunate that Brock consistently seeks to establish Garrett Anderson’s greatness by contrasting her triumphs with Jex-Blake’s supposed failures.⁵⁵³

For example, sounding a great deal like the Frances Hoggan of 1884, Brock directly contrasts Jex-Blake’s flawed, self-promoting approach with Garrett Anderson’s superior professionalism:

Unlike Sophia Jex-Blake, whose enthusiasm for the cause and spontaneity of reaction sometimes caused her notoriety, and whose academic failures were only too well publicized, Elizabeth Garrett knew exactly how to advertise herself in a professional manner and win contemporary medical fame, ‘money and influence.’⁵⁵⁴

This kind of argument, which suggests that one woman must be the winner and one the loser, is a direct reflection of nineteenth century debates that pitted the two women against each other.

Brock even goes so far as to use some of Jex-Blake’s own supporters against her by claiming that they also saw Garrett Anderson as the superior pioneering female doctor. For example, at one point she argues that Stansfeld’s famous 1879 article, which I discuss earlier in this chapter, actually supports Garrett Anderson more so than Jex-Blake. After quoting a passage from the article that explains why he dates the movement for female doctors to Jex-Blake’s attempt to enter Edinburgh and not from Garrett Anderson’s “personally successful attempt,” Brock writes: “On the surface Stansfeld awards distinction to Jex-Blake; for it was she who courageously fought so publicly for recognition. However, on closer examination, it is Garrett

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 329.

Anderson who possesses ‘prestige’ of ‘character and repute’; it is Garrett Anderson who, through her own conduct, has attained both public conduct and professional respect.”⁵⁵⁵ By presenting Stansfeld in this way, I believe that Brock is guilty of cherry picking the evidence. She emphasizes Stansfeld’s praise of Garrett, while ignoring the very substantial passages in which he praises Jex-Blake’s contributions, and she also implies that because Stansfeld referred to Garrett Anderson’s “prestige of character and repute” while explaining why he saw Jex-Blake, and not Garrett Anderson, as the forerunner of the movement, Stansfeld was actually implying by omission that Jex-Blake lacked these fine qualities. It is not clear why Stansfeld has to be drawn into this since an argument for Garrett Anderson’s strategic genius can be constructed from her own words and actions. It does not require a revisionist account of Stansfeld that proves he privately thought less of Jex-Blake than Garrett Anderson.

Like nearly all of Jex-Blake’s enemies in the 1870s, Brock emphasizes the fact that Jex-Blake’s failed her 1872 professional examinations, citing that as one of the reasons that she also failed in her effort to publicize the campaign. Her section on Jex-Blake’s so-called “academic failure,” which she describes it as “a gift” for those who believed women lacked intellectual powers and professionalism, is noteworthy here as an example of how contemporary analyses can be perpetuated by historians.⁵⁵⁶ Brock not only describes the failure but goes on to quote a lengthy contemporary passage from the *Lancet* entitled “The Cost of Notoriety” that ridicules Jex-Blake as part of her effort to show how Jex-Blake was publicly chastised for the failure. In one particularly cutting line from this passage, the *Lancet* jokes: “Medical students who have lately endured the pangs of a plucking must rejoice that they are not so well known to the public

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 326.

as is the champion of women's rights, Jex-Blake."⁵⁵⁷ As Brock puts it: "A prominent public position could be useful when trying to win allies but living one's daily life in the press, as Jex-Blake had done while battling the university, would ensure that every detail could become public knowledge."⁵⁵⁸ Of course, it goes without saying that this is true of anyone who puts herself out there to publicly fight for a cause.

Brock's also frames Jex-Blake as one of "those women who desired to make a name for themselves in the medical profession."⁵⁵⁹ However, what many of Jex-Blake's critics, including Brock, leave out of the narrative is the fact that 1872 was the most challenging and stressful year of the entire campaign. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Jex-Blake spent most of 1872 battling the university in the court after filing a lawsuit to counter the medical faculty's claim that many Infirmary contributors who happened to support the female students could not vote. We now know that after the women won their case in the summer of 1872, and Jex-Blake believed the immediate battle was resolved, she immediately wrote two *Scotsman* leaders on subjects completely unrelated to the campaign or herself. If the University had not appealed their case in the autumn of 1872, creating a tremendous distraction for Jex-Blake, it is possible that she would have passed. In addition, Brock fails to mention that the reason Jex-Blake did not take her examinations the previous year, in the autumn of 1871, is that she was fighting a legal battle with the University after they refused to allow the newest cohort of female students to take their matriculation examinations. As Rosemary Van Arsdel explains: "Privately, the authorities offered to let the first group finish the course and take their degrees, but as a matter of favor, not to set a precedent. It is a measure of Jex-Blake's leadership that she refused instantly."⁵⁶⁰ In other

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 327

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 326.

⁵⁶⁰ Van Arsdel, Rosemary. *Florence Fenwick Miller*, 19.

words, there is evidence to support the argument that rather than “actively [seeking] public recognition” for herself, Jex-Blake’s failure was due in large part to her selfless actions on behalf of others and her refusal to focus only on herself and her public reputation.

Brock also criticizes Jex-Blake for sending a letter defending her exam performance to *The Times* in 1874. She writes, “Jex-Blake’s lack of success resurfaced nearly two years later in *The Times* . . . Following a letter written by Isabel Thorne to defend Jex-Blake against an anonymous . . . mention of academic ‘non-success’ in a previous issue, Jex-Blake herself wrote to *The Times* to defend her failure.”⁵⁶¹ Brock cites her agreement with Todd’s somewhat dramatic concession in the *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* that submitting this letter to *The Times* was “the great and crowning mistake of [Jex-Blake’s] life.”⁵⁶² As Brock puts it in somewhat hyperbolic language of her own, “[H]er friend and first biographer [Todd] shuddered textually when she thought of the debacle over forty years later.”⁵⁶³ What Brock leaves out of her account is everything that Todd adds to contextualize this event after making that concession. Among other points, Todd explains that Jex-Blake had long believed that she had passed and that the practice of having students write their names on the back of the examinations lent itself to bias. Instead of addressing the possibility of gender-based discrimination, Brock moves in the opposite direction when she argues that “Jex-Blake’s main offence was unprofessionalism; her sex became second to the betrayal of her colleagues.”⁵⁶⁴

One of the more puzzling aspects of this article is that it seems to have been established upon the assumption that Garrett Anderson has not been properly elevated in the historical record in proportion to her success as a publicist for the cause of medical women; at the same time, it

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 327.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 328.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 328.

argues that Jex-Blake has been provided with too much credit for publicizing the same cause, which enabled her to eclipse Garrett Anderson in the historical record. Neither of these claims seem accurate. As the first woman in Britain to qualify as a licensed physician, the first to be elected as a mayor, the first to serve as a medical school dean, and more, Garrett Anderson is a figure who has received a great deal of credit for convincing the public of the value of female doctors. To this day she retains a well known position in the historical record as Britain's first pioneering female doctor, a fact which Brock cites to support her argument for Garrett Anderson's effectiveness even as she simultaneously argues that Garrett Anderson has been overlooked for her contributions. It is the women's hospital that Garrett Anderson founded, not the one that Jex-Blake founded, that is memorialized today (as the *Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Gallery* at the UNISON Centre) despite the fact that Jex-Blake's hospital remained in existence for over 100 years.⁵⁶⁵ Garrett Anderson's name has been attached to many prestigious institutions throughout England, including the University College Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Wing at University College Hospital; The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Programme of the NHS Leadership Academy; The Garrett Anderson Centre, a critical care centre at Ipswich Hospital; and the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School, a competitive secondary school for girls in London. All of these facts seemed to both support and counter Brock's claim that Garrett Anderson had been enormously successful at managing her image, winning fame, and winning influence, while simultaneously not managing to receive the credit and recognition she deserved. Jex-Blake had not received nearly as much public recognition or scholarly attention as Garrett Anderson, and

⁵⁶⁵ It also seems significant that while the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children (later The Bruntsfield Hospital) was founded by Jex-Blake in 1885 and remained in operation, serving Edinburgh's women and children for over 100 years until it finally closed in 1989, it is rarely mentioned in accounts of her life. In fact, most studies of Jex-Blake's later years focus disproportionate attention on her more controversial and dramatic efforts to run the Edinburgh School for Women, which was in operation for twelve years. It closed after one of Jex-Blake's students rebelled against her strict rules and discipline and opened a competing school, eventually forcing Jex-Blake's school to close after an exhausting public battle. In the time it was open, the school educated about 80 female students and graduated 33 primarily from Great Britain and India (Somerville 266). For a concise overview of Jex-Blake's role at the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women, see J.M. Somerville's "Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake and the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women, 1886-1898," 2005.

while some scholars like Swenson, Roberts, and Blake had praised her for her efforts to publicize the campaign, others, like Hoggan and Bonner, had criticized and blamed her for damaging the movement.

A question for both Jex-Blake's time and our own is why one woman's greatness has to come at the expense of another's. After all, both Jex-Blake and Garrett Anderson had flaws, and both also made significant contributions to the effort to open the medical profession to women. It is unfortunate that this 150-year old argument about which woman was best or most important is still ongoing, not the least because framing the conversation in this way prevents us from discussing their differing personalities and strategies in more productive ways. I hope that in the future, scholars will begin to directly address and challenge narratives from primary sources like the Hoggan chapter that pit them against each other rather than endlessly perpetuating them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have aimed to contextualize Jex-Blake's use of the *Scotsman* in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*. This is significant to our understanding of Jex-Blake and the campaign in part because many of the biases of her nineteenth-century critics have been perpetuated into the present, impacting the way she is perceived today. Examining Jex-Blake's writing for the *Scotsman* and subsequent efforts to keep her publications anonymous while employing a practice of self-citation in *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* deepens our

understanding, not only of Jex-Blake as a historical figure, but also of the diversity of women's voices speaking from within Victorian newspapers and their ability to effect social change.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶ Because the fine texture of nineteenth-century debate was most completely embodied in newspapers, they are crucial sites in the articulation and representation of Victorian feminism.

Epilogue

Toward the end of *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, Margaret Todd provides the reader an anecdote that helps explain Jex-Blake's state of mind in 1886, the same year that *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History* was published. Jex-Blake had recently agreed to give one of a series of free lectures as part of a "Health Lectures in Edinburgh" series. Her lecture was to be delivered to women only, and she would not be paid. However, while preparations were underway, the committee planning the event reached out to Jex-Blake and proposed that she charge one shilling for admission to the lectures because the corresponding lecture to men was going to charge the same amount, and the male doctors were uncomfortable with the idea that hers would be free while theirs would not. Jex-Blake believed that requesting a charge would "do away with more than half the good of her lecture," which was to be given for the benefit of the community.⁵⁶⁷ In a letter to the head of the committee, Lady Trayner, Jex-Blake provides a response that Todd describes as "characteristic of her attitude at the time":

Pray thank Lord Trayner warmly for his kind interest in me and the medical women generally. I think, however, that he somewhat over-estimates the importance of what the men doctors may think one way or another. You and he will remember that all we have gained has been gained in the teeth of nearly all of them, and if they have failed to hinder me hitherto, they are certainly powerless to hurt me now . . . I am willing enough to shake hands with them if they wish it, but you must remember that it is I and not they who have the old sores to forgive . . . I am sure you will understand that I say this merely because I want you to

⁵⁶⁷ Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 297.

understand that my position is probably one of the most independent in Edinburgh,--I want nothing from anybody and I fear nothing from anybody. I mean to do in this, and larger matters, what seems to me right, to the best of my lights, and I have long ago learned while doing so to leave consequences to take care of themselves.⁵⁶⁸

Jex-Blake's letter, much like her general approach to the campaign itself, reflects her unwillingness to conform by supporting a system that prioritized the desires and feelings of men and maintained their position of dominance in society. As we have seen, Jex-Blake fought for systemic change, and although doing so often had the effect of, as her father once put it, "spreading discomfort all around," she believed it was the best way forward. Doing "what seems to me right" appears to have included her decision to employ a practice of anonymous self-citation as a form of activism. The letter also suggests that even late in her life she saw herself as the aggrieved party and believed, like Stansfeld, Pechey, and others, that the medical men had been to blame.

In sharing this letter, Todd seems to imagine that her reader might not think kindly of Jex-Blake. In characteristic fashion, she attempts to quickly explain Jex-Blake's presumably unpleasant behavior: "If this seems written in an ungracious, reprehensible spirit, the reader must bear in mind the fire the writer had come through."⁵⁶⁹ She also suggests that Jex-Blake did not have the kind of community support in Edinburgh that she might otherwise have had because she refused to take an interest in missions or to conform to the standard that had been established. As a close friend once told her in frustration: "You might have Edinburgh at your feet if you would

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

go to church regularly and show yourself a religious woman.” Having clearly defined her subject by this point in the narrative, Todd simply writes of this, “It is needless to say that these were not the arguments to use with S. J.-B.”⁵⁷⁰

Until she retired and moved to Sussex with Todd in 1899, Jex-Blake’s professional life, much like her campaign, consisted of extreme highs and extreme lows. Her Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women closed after twelve years when some of her students rebelled against her authority and opened a competing school, essentially forcing her out of business in the most public and painful way imaginable. However, her private practice thrived, and the women’s hospital she established would remain in operation for over a century. In 1895 Professor Balfour, who had been supportive of her efforts during the Edinburgh campaign, asked Jex-Blake to become the first woman to be recognized as a lecturer at the Edinburgh University Extra-Mural School. Edith Pechey responded to the news in an ecstatic letter: “Hip Hooray!!!! . . . In the very place where we were stoned and beaten 18 years ago. Well, I am glad to have lived to see the day.”⁵⁷¹ In one letter from this period, Jex-Blake writes of a professional visit to the “awful University Court Room, where our case had over and over again been tried by hostile authority, and lost, without an opportunity for a word in our own defence.”⁵⁷² Entering that same room later in life in her capacity as Lecturer of Midwifery, she describes the sensation at finding herself “an invited delegate, at whose entrance the Chairman rose and came forward with outstretched hand.”⁵⁷³ On the wall before her was a painting of her former opponent Christison, who had passed away some years before, and remembering this Jex-Blake writes: “Sir Robert Christison

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 300.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 302.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 305.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

looked down from the wall, and it made me almost chuckle to think what he would have said!”⁵⁷⁴

While her writing and activism on behalf of medical women would continue through the end of her life, Jex-Blake spent her final years in a country house in comfortable retirement with Margaret Todd. As Todd reflects on the last decades of Jex-Blake’s life, she indirectly references herself when she writes: “And one is glad to record that never again to the end of life did she suffer the weeks and months of loneliness that had darkened the early days of her professional career.”⁵⁷⁵

Final Thoughts

By drawing attention to previously unknown aspects of Jex-Blake's prolific writing career, this dissertation contributes to existing scholarship on Jex-Blake's impact on the medical women's campaign as well as women's professional journalism and the role of newspapers in the Victorian period. It offers an important look at the challenges faced by medical women as they attempted to gain authority not only as writers, but also as medical professionals and helps us understand the relationship between the two. Attending to this relationship allows us to better understand not only how Jex-Blake’s writing shaped both public perception and the struggle for medical authority, but also the intersection between key institutions of nineteenth century professional life (medicine, education, and the press) and the personal relationships that sustained them.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., 301.

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