

WOMEN AS LAWYERS.

The fitness and success of women as doctors have been so positive as to fully answer the question of their need in the profession of medicine, and the topic which a few years ago was so full of interest both scientifically and socially has ceased to be a matter of special discussion in the light of abundant practical experience. Of just what scientific value the introduction of Woman into the study and practice of medicine has been, or will be, to the profession, will in due time form a subject of computation to some writer of the future analytically minded. But in the study and practice of the law the woman element is comparatively new. So little has been accomplished in this respect by women in the East as scarcely to be discerned, but in the west, where the grooves of custom are less strongly defined, and where both men and women have a better chance for the development of the faith that is within them, enough has been accomplished to merit the name of a respectable beginning.

Perhaps the most successful woman in law—certainly the one whose name has come most prominently before the public as a lawyer—is Lavinia Goodell, of Janesville, Wis.; and a slight account at this time of her legal career may not fail to be of interest. Some years ago, when I first knew Miss Goodell, she was employed in a literary way in the office of Harper's Bazar—a shrewd, quick-witted girl, fond of humor, studious and argumentative. In person she was of medium height, but looking tall from her slender, erect figure, blue-eyed, and with light brown curling hair. She soon after resigned her position in New York, and went West, at the request of her parents, who had become aged and wanted her with them. Lavinia had long had a taste for legal reading, and displayed decided talent for transacting business, and in her early girlish days secretly thought that she would like to be a lawyer. But at that time such a career seemed impossible for her, and she gave up the idea almost as soon as it had taken shape to do the duty that lay nearest her.

After joining her parents (she was born in New England, I think, and her father was intimately associated with Garrison in the Abolition movement) she was undecided what she should do. Then arose the old longing to study law. She had the leisure for it, and her father encouraged her in it. A lawyer in the town was willing to help her, and so she began to study, without, however, seeing her way clear to the practice of law. She continued her reading, becoming more and more absorbed in it. At the end of three years of study she decided to apply for admission to the Circuit Court, was examined, passed a brilliant examination, and was admitted. Following this were numerous compliments from members of the bar, newspaper puffs and applause all around. She then opened an office and proceeded in a perfectly business-like way to practice her profession. Her first case was a prosecution of liquor dealers for illegal-selling in an adjoining county. The district attorney, being a liquor-man," was not considered trust-worthy by the temperance women who were the real prosecutors in the case, and they employed Miss Goodell, who won her suit, first in the justice's court, and, the defendants appealing, the second time in the Circuit Court. This success gained her considerable reputation and gave her a good start. Then she had some criminal defences and collections resulting in suits in which she had fair success. But a case which extended her reputation throughout the State and country was

one involving twelve hundred dollars, in which her client was a woman. The case was carried from the County Court and Circuit Court, and appealed from that to the Supreme Court, where she won. According to the law of Wisconsin, Miss Goodell's admission to the Circuit Court at the outset of her legal career admitted her to all the courts in the State but the Supreme Court. Upon carrying up her case and applying for admission to this, the chief-justice (Ryan) refused her on the ground of sex. The arguments appear in substance in volume xxxix. (I think) of Wisconsin Reports—In re Goodell—to be found under the head of "Attorneys." This refusal to admit Miss Goodell to practice in the Supreme Court created much sensation, and was commented on by various newspapers in the country—mostly in the lady's favor. She afterward reviewed the chief-justice's opinion on her case in the Legal News (Chicago), and unquestionably had the better of him in the argument. She also prepared a bill and sent it to the State Legislature, providing that no person should be refused admission to the bar on account of sex. A petition asking for its passage was signed by the circuit judge and every member of the bar in the county, in such high esteem was Miss Goodell held by the lawyers of Janesville. The bill passed, although strongly contested by the Ryan party.

It is a notable fact in Miss Goodell's practice that her best-paying clients have been women. She had no reason to complain of opposition from her own sex, and has proved, what many another woman has before her, that the right sort of a woman will have the sympathy of women, even though they are supposed to be so hostile to innovations from one of their own number.— M. W. P. in Lippincott's for March.