

THE PRESENT-DAY PROBLEM OF WOMAN'S EDUCATION

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At the present day it is scarcely conceivable that at one time, not long since, women were deemed unworthy subjects for an education. As in China to-day, it was once thought in all other countries that woman did not need an education and that if she did she had not the ability to acquire it. Gradually it became generally recognized that education could do much for woman and that she was as capable of learning as man; but another difficulty then arose, the question of health. When the privileges of education were given to woman she entered school life enthusiastically. It is true that many who completed courses at college became broken down physically, but at the same time there were many more who completed such courses with unimpaired health. It is still held by many that education is a menace to health, but there are many others who now attribute the ill health of students to other causes. Some over-ambitious persons study and work beyond their strength unnecessarily. They try to complete their education in too short a time, making no allowance for conditions that hinder everyone more or less while they are endeavoring to get an education. Likewise it is said by some that the moral effect of education is disastrous. Where colleges furnish the opportunity for physical culture, it has been shown in many instances, some here in our own College, that women complete courses of study in much better health than if they had not entered such institutions and had been without such physical training. Just as colleges furnish an opportunity for the improvement of physical health, so the influence of college life raises the moral standard of women.

Another objection that is raised against the higher training of woman is that time and means are wasted. Although this may

be true in the sense that she may not use her education directly to earn money, yet, when we look to the true purpose of learning, an all-round education, whether academic, professional, or both, cannot but be a benefit to her who receives it and to all with whom she may come in contact. With a knowledge of many things she is better prepared for whatever she may do. She is more confident and will succeed with work which, without an education, she would not have attempted. By the age of twenty-one she may receive quite a general education, and has time after that to specialize if she so desires. She will be better prepared to earn her own way, whether it be necessary to or not. In either case, the time and means of her education cannot be called wasted.

In colonial times there were schools called Dame schools that were taught by women, usually in some room in their own homes. These schools were open to women from the first, and were the only source of book learning for girls, as well as boys, during at least a century of our colonial history. The teacher in many cases knew little beyond the letters she was teaching. A single copy of the Horn book, a primer containing the alphabet, large and small, with perhaps a small regimen of monosyllables, the Lord's Prayer, and the Roman numerals, was all the equipment had. As time went on grammar schools were established in great numbers, but only occasionally are there instances in which girls were in any way admitted until nearly the beginning of the nineteenth century. So the Dame school was supreme in the matter of female education until well toward the time of the Revolution. Then girls were admitted at odd times, such as two hours after the boys were dismissed. Toward the end of the eighteenth cen-

tury many New England towns made provision for the instruction of girls, but the two sexes were rarely together in the same school. There were the so-called "Double-headed" schools, in which girls were given the same privileges as boys, though the two sexes were taught separately. These were the girls' common schools in the city until about the time of the girls' grammar school in 1826. There were several private schools, too, for girls toward the latter part of the eighteenth century.

By 1789 the famous New England academies were being established, and, although the greater number of them were for boys only, some were coeducational from the start. Bradford, founded in 1803, originally admitted both sexes, but the girls gradually displaced the boys, and for many years now it has been one of the best-known schools for girls in the East. Leister Academy, 1784, and Westford Academy were coeducational. Adams Academy at Derry, N. H., was established in 1823 expressly for girls. At Andover, Mass., in 1829, Abbot Academy and in 1821 a female seminary at Troy, N. Y., were established.

In other parts of the country we find even less willingness on the part of schools to admit girls to their privileges than was the case in New England. In the South the wealthier classes provided tutors for the boys, and the girls seem in some cases to have shared the educational privileges of their brothers, with sometimes a visit to Europe to ensure proper social polish. The home, however, was thought to be school enough for them, and the housewifely duties a sufficiently extended curriculum. In 1875 there were three hundred eleven separate schools for girls of a secondary grade, but the number is somewhat less to-day, owing to the fact that a considerable proportion of them were pub-

lic high schools which have been merged with those for boys, and also to the fact that competition with the public schools has caused others to close their doors. Coeducation, which was adopted first because of economy and since for pedagogic reasons, has resulted in giving girls the same advantages as boys. Where economic conditions allowed, separate schools were maintained as in Boston to-day. But the character of the work of these schools was not of so high a standard as in the ones for boys.

For the higher education of women to-day there are three possible plans. There are separate schools for girls with distinct and separate foundations, as is the rule in Germany, France, and England. Then there are annexes to men's schools or subdepartments of the schools. These dual schools consist of separate departments for boys and girls, but the whole is placed under one teacher, generally a master, and the staff is distributed for economy's sake over the two departments. Of the three kinds of institutions for the higher education of women, these were the last to come. Thirdly, there are the mixed schools, where the girls are taught side by side with the boys and by a male or female teacher. In America coeducation is almost universal, and has recently been tried in a few schools in England. It is believed now that the education of women must be carried out on lines somewhat different in method, but not in purpose, from those for men.

Nearly two hundred years elapsed between the establishment of Harvard College for men and the first school for the higher education of women. And there were six great colleges established for men before any provision was made for women. This

shows that women must have learned very rapidly, for we find to-day as many well-educated women as men. And if there are not as many women as men that have the higher education, it is because they have not been encouraged to take up the more difficult work. However, to-day more women are encouraged to secure a higher education. Indeed, it is held by many that the higher education of women is absolutely essential to the safety and progress of the state.

The decade from 1830 to 1839 saw the beginning of the higher education of women in our country. There are three groups of independent colleges for women. First, there are the so-called "four great colleges for women"--Vassar at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., Smith at Northampton, Mass., Wellesly at Wellesly, Mass., and Bryn Mawr at Bryn Mawr, Pa. Then there are three other very important ones--Mt. Holyoke College situated at South Hadley, Mass., Woman's College of Baltimore, Md., and Wells College at Aurora, N. Y. The third group contains Elmira College at Elmira, N. Y., Randolph-Macon Women's College at Lynchburg, Vir., Rockford College, Rockford, Mass., and Mills College in California. There are five affiliated colleges in the United States--Radcliffe at Cambridge, Mass., affiliated to Harvard University, Barnard College in New York City affiliated to Columbia University, the Women's College of Brown University, Providence, R. I., the college for women at Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, and the H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College, affiliated with Tulane University, New Orleans, La. Of the coeducational institutions Oberlin Collegiate Institute (since 1850 Oberlin College, Ohio) opened its doors in 1833 to men and women alike, and must be given credit for being the first fully coeducational institu-

tion of college grade in the world. Antioch College, at that time in the same state as Oberlin, was next, though twenty years later, to become coeducational. Then many colleges and universities, such as the state universities, followed. Graduate instruction for women may be had in all the fully coeducational institutions and in the affiliated colleges, with the exception of that of Harvard. Of the great universities for men which do not admit women to their undergraduate courses, but two (Princeton and John Hopkins) still have their graduate school closed to them. To-day, nearly all the professional schools are coeducational. Other than the four or five medical schools, there exist no professional schools for women only. Few women were pursuing professional courses previous to 1890, and, except in the training schools for nurses, the numerical increase in enrolment has not been very great. Statistics would tend to show that as yet the learned professions offer few attractions to women.

If woman has the means and courage she may receive whatever kind of education she desires, for she has access to both academic and professional institutions. Is it not every woman's ambition to receive these high privileges now accorded to her without losing the virtues she has inherited from the past, namely, those of womanliness? How best can she satisfy her ambition? To-day, and for ages, sentiment has established the principle that every woman lives the most perfect, normal life when she marries and performs well all the duties of homemaking. But, granting this under proper conditions to be the most noble of courses to pursue, it is certain that it is not possible for all women to take such a course. Many women have other duties, such as caring for aged parents or guardians, that require their

attention a large part of their lives, while others throughout life do not find persons suited to be their life companions.

However, whatever course a woman may choose to take she has a great disadvantage confronting her. Her preparation for life is two-fold, for, whether she prepares for marriage or independent living, she must know the essentials of housekeeping. If she marries she will obviously need to have a greater knowledge of home making, while should she live an independent life more of her period of preparation must be spent in learning an occupation by which she will be able to earn her own living and perhaps support others. In preparing for either course much time will be needed to learn well all that she should know for complete living. Consequently, her education must be somewhat superficial if she finishes it at an earlier age than man. And she is often expected to do this. Women surely desire as thorough a knowledge of their subjects as men, and also desire music, drawing, and other accomplishments, but because of this two-fold preparation sufficient time will not be available and some of their desires must necessarily be sacrificed. Whatever course woman may pursue it is certain, also, that her preparation for her life work will steadily become more thorough, for it is now far more thorough and widespread than it ever has been in the past. There are women who are great scientists, some of whom, though ever advancing, prefer the responsible duties of marriage to still higher learning. These women may also know the essentials of good housekeeping, but such persons are the exception.

In the future, woman will understand better what she should know and will receive more encouragement to learn it. There will then be better homes,--better houses, food, clothing, and better

faiths--that which is most essential for a higher type of humanity.

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