

*Educational Institutions
for Women.*

Elda L. Moore.

17446

Educational Institutions for Women.

I. Introduction.

II. What shall woman be taught.

a. Practical as well as mental things.

a'. Domestic Economy etc.

III. Advantages of college education to woman.

a. Methods of support.

b. Better fitted for the world.

c. Brain more fully developed.

d. Is more capable of deciding wisely, and of forming higher ideals.

IV. Advancement of woman's education.

a. First book printed for her benefit 1372.

b. Boston school one-hundred years ago.

c. First High School.

d. Vassar College.

e. Wellesley College, Northampton, Liberal Arts, and Annex.

V. Description of some of the colleges.

VI. Health of college woman.

a. Exercise for woman.

b. Fashionable dress.

c. Disadvantages of Public Days.

VII. Conclusion.

One of the great facts of our time, is the advancement which is being made in the education of women. It is a bold, forward movement, full of importance, and one that should attract the attention of every American citizen. Society is actively awakened to it, and although critics may find fault with it, yet for all this there are good intentions and an earnest spirit behind it.

The education of woman should cause no more excitement than womanly goodness and beauty; and if the world would use its common sagacity, her moral goodness would be considered no more closely than the cultivation of her mind.

The question as to what woman shall be taught in her education, is very important, yet if she is only given a chance to acquire an education when she needs it, I trust that she will become a responsible judge of her own needs. Nevertheless, whatever course she chooses to pursue, she should be given a college education that will teach with the work, practical duties:— things that enter in the home of everyday life, such as Domestic Economy. Another important

thing to teach her is the principle of self-dependence. One of the best things that can be done for a girl, that will be of a lasting benefit to her, is to give an opportunity for self-support while in college. I do not mean to say that she should be compelled to rely wholly on herself, but just to such an extent that she will learn to appreciate her education when she has obtained it.

The manual labor that she employs should be educating; - no girl should consider paid labor ignoble, but rather a vocation that she may be proud of, proud to think she is capable of following.

The advantages of a college education to woman are many. Girls who have had a college training are much more competent for their work in life than those who have not had this privilege; and even those who do not teach, go out into the world and exert a great influence on the elevation of the general intelligence of the people at large. They are capable of elevating their own household, and exert an influence on the private citizen: - "The standard is raised at home, and Home is the Fountain-head." The

woman who becomes educated is as liable to marry as any other one, but the fact, that mental training has led her to think, and has cultivated her judgment, she has gained an advantage over her uneducated girl friend in choosing a husband; so we see that in accordance to the number of educated women, will the number of ill-considered marriages be decreased.

Eminent physicians who have considered the matter, are led to the conclusion that the idle brain is more liable to become injured than the working brain. The person who has nothing to do worries the brain, while if he is engaged in some mental pursuit his brain is stimulated and strengthened. They say that it is not work, but worry that kills the brain: - "Brain work is the highest of all antidotes to worry." People mentally employed worry less than those manually employed, as their whole mind is taken up with their work, and time passes quickly and pleasantly. Thus we see what a great benefit to the womanly character education would be. It would employ and develop her mind to higher ideals, and elevate her to that

standard where she will seek some aim in life.

Some people still cling to the view that young women had better be found in the kitchen or dairy, than in the laboratory or class-room, and point the finger of scorn at them, and say all manner of things about the mentally trained girl who cannot bake a cake nor scrub a floor; but the future prospects of our system of college training for girls will not long allow such remarks to be made of her. If we take together all the advantages derived by the education of woman, the good it has done for the world at large, for literature, benevolence, and the love of mankind, yet all these cannot begin to compare with the good that it has done for herself, by the new heart created in the world toward woman. She has a higher tone of thought, a broader sympathy, and her appreciation in respect to her own character and life has become of a more spiritual nature. She has acquired the practical, personal benefit, and has become wise and powerful enough to enable her to develop, control, and elevate her own nature to the extent that will enable her to accomplish her work in life.

It has been but a few years since the advancement of womanly education has been considered of importance enough to receive any special notice. In the Middle Ages education was an accomplishment of only a few individuals, and the education of woman was small indeed. As the world advanced she was left behind, to obtain what education she could privately, or else not at all. In 1372 when Chaucer was in Italy the subject of education of woman was brought to the front by the worthy father of three motherless daughters, he having prepared a book for educating them; but it was very meagre, and the benefits derived from it by the daughters very fragmentary. Woman's chief duty was supposed to be to spin and knit; even in our own day we find people who hold the idea "That if woman eat of the tree of knowledge the rest of the family will be reduced to the same kind of aerial diet." The story of the advancement of woman's education in our own day, and even in our own country is not a very pleasing one. Many people refer us to the New England settlers as a great educational people, who established

colleges beside their churches, and held that education was the main requisite to the progress of the people; yet for all this, men only, were given good opportunities for learning; women being thought to need only enough education to enable them to read and write. About one hundred years ago a school was established in Boston in which both boys and girls were admitted, but the girls were allowed to attend but six months in a year. The first High School was opened there for girls in 1825, but was soon closed as it was thought to be too expensive.

Meanwhileassar College was with its good work opened. It opened in 1865, which marks an era in history. While the Civil War was raging, a millionaire of Poughkeepsie was quietly preparing the first fully endowed educational institution for the collegiate education of women. Through the establishment of this college the world was led to see that the education of woman was barren, confused, and undisciplined. The applicants were earnest of purpose, but were unable to determine what they needed. They were fond of one study and detested another. This college was followed

by Wellesley College at Wellesley; Smith, at Northampton; Liberal Arts connected with Boston University; and The Annex at Cambridge. We see that the advancement of woman's education has been rapid in late years, but it is no wise less sound in character, and the future promise of advancement is still greater; also the efforts which are being made to deepen and broaden the intellect of woman will be of wonderful benefit to the coming generation of Americans.

Atassar College as well as at Wellesley, the hours for rising and retiring, ventilation of rooms, choosing and preparing foods, the sanitary arrangement of college and the regimen of personal habits, are all directed with care. All students must take invigorating exercise for a given time each day; the grounds of the colleges cover each over two-hundred acres; several miles of gravel walks; a lake for boating and skating for out-door exercise, and a gymnasium and bowling alley for indoor exercise.

The plea is often made that woman is unable to endure the physical strain of college life. Now if she is mentally weak, she

may strengthen her mind by study, providing it does not interfere with her physical strength. The length of the lives of the educated and uneducated, also of those engaged in mental labor, have been investigated by physicians. Of the educated and uneducated, five-hundred men of each were taken, the average length of life of the educated was about sixty-four years, of the uneducated, about fifty years; and with one-hundred men engaged in mental work the average length of life was seventy years. Now why should not the same principle apply to women, that she lives longer when mentally employed than when not. It will, and we find that it does, if she takes the proper care of herself in other respects.

We often hear the remark that American women are not as strong physically as the women of the Eastern Continent, and that it is due to her engaging in mental duties more than the women of other countries, overtaxation of nerve and brain. But let us consider the matter more closely and we will find that it is due to entirely different causes. People of other countries speak of

the American people as a nation who are determined to become rich in a day; they go at everything in a hurry; work too hard, retire late and arise early, sleep little and dream much, eat fast and in large quantities, overtax their nerves, take few holidays, and less mental exercise, and various other things might be mentioned, but enough has been given to show that there is sufficient reasons to show why the American woman is not equal to the women of other nations in physical strength, other than that of her college work. The American girl does not obtain the necessary out-of-door exercise; she seldom walks a very great distance, and she is prohibited from engaging in many of the healthful games. Propriety forbids her taking part with her brother in many of the out-door games which would be a great benefit to her physically. The American fashions of dress are no less injurious to the physical condition of the American girl. All the fashion and faddy tell on her much more than her mental work, and the wonder is, that she does endure college work under these conditions, and that she is physically as

strong as her brother, who doubtless would be killed off in a short time under the same circumstances. But how shall we alter these conditions? Some will say, we must keep pace with the prevailing ideas, or we lose our womanliness. Not so. If a girl becomes cultured she will become womanly, as the two virtues cooperate. Girls do occasionally break down in college, but break down as often when not in college, and when she does so while in college it is in most cases due to outside work, other than that of her college duties.

At the State University Kansas, the girl students have reported that their college course is an advantage to their physical strength, and attribute it to more regular habits of life. Eat at certain times and less between meals; arise and retire at the same hours, and that college life compels them to systemize their work. Others claim that it is due to their mind being in a more calm state, deriving peace and satisfaction from the knowledge they have gained, and knowing that they have accomplished something.

There are some disadvantages in the present system of colleges for women. The thought of Commencement Day with its hurry, excitement, ceremonies, and dress, are in the mind of college girls during the whole period of the last year more than her lessons are, and cause more work and worry. Visitors do not, and cannot appreciate Commencement Day; they see the buildings, hear the graduates speak, and see them presented their diplomas, but cannot know of the hard work that is presented behind all this scenery.

What is needed most in our women's colleges are endowments; not in the form of fine buildings, but of money to educate.

The buildings may be added in accordance.

Certainly woman has now gained the opportunity to obtain a college education where she may in some way do herself justice, and, "May sense and sentiment, wisdom and beauty, goodness and taste, abide in unity within the mind of every cultivated woman, and qualify her for the full and complete occupancy of that sphere to which Providence has assigned her."

Bibliography:—

Harpers Magazine. Volumes 15 and 67.

Electric Magazine. Volume 107.

Century Magazine. Volumes 3 and 14.

Education. Volumes 1, 4, and 6.

North American Review Volume 136.

Literary World. Volume 4.

Littell's Living Age. Vol. 30.

Scribner's Monthly, Volume 18.

Rural New Yorker, 1887.

Kansas Agricultural Report. 1874.

Addresses and Proceedings of The National Association, 1884.

Trans. Kansas Academy of Science, Vol. 13.

Rep't. of The Commissioners of Education,
1884-5, 1887-8, and 1891-2, Volume 2.