

1896

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Graduating Thesis

Should Cooking and Sewing be
Taught in our Public Schools.

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Books Consulted.

Educational Reports of Kansas.
March Review of Reviews. 1886.
Report of Committee on sewing and cooking
in Boston Schools.

It has been said, that "The aim of education for the boy in America is to make of him a free, self directing man; a man ready and able to act intelligently, nobly, and strongly in all affairs of life; a man, who while taking full account of the world in which he acts, does not find the principles or sanction of his actions there but in his own righteous will - that is his education will include mainly those sciences which relate to man and his relation to the world of nature and the world of spirit."

If this is true of the boy's education is it not also true of the girls? Her education should consist of those sciences which relate to woman and her relation to the world.

This question though long neglected is now confronting the public, and in many places it is inciting within the people, an enthusiasm which will result in the establishment of cooking and sewing in our Public Schools.

Should this be done?

The Public School is the bulwark of a nation. It is here that the young mind begins an education, which if rightly directed, will make a successful woman in the world. It is here that the stones are selected, and the foundation of a future life is begun. If it is necessary that this foundation be laid with the principles of reading, writing, and spelling, how much more necessary is it that cooking and sewing should form the corner stones. No girl can truly say that her education is finished until she has a thorough knowledge of cooking and sewing.

Of course many will say that the home is the place for the girl to master these tasks, but so many of the mothers ^{neglect} this, the most important duty, thinking that the work can be done better, quicker, and easier by doing it themselves than by teaching the girl. Where then shall she begin? The answer is in the Public School.

In the schools that have adopted this work they begin in the grammar

department. Four hours of the week may be spent in this work, two in cooking and two in sewing.

In sewing attention is given first to simple, plain work, and this is given up for harder work as they advance.

The child is expected to bring work from home, but in case she does not, the instructor is expected to have on hand, some article on which she may work.

In the Boston School patching and darning were first given particular attention. The result proved so satisfactory that a proposal made, to teach the girls the art of cutting and fitting their own dresses, was met with approval.

Another evidence of the satisfaction gained from this work, is seen in the cooking school held in connection with the Farmer's Institute at Monroe Wisconsin. Every thing was prepared with such delicacy and taste that no one could deny the sentiments expressed by a certain person who said that

"A good cook was the noblest work of God," and that he would like to see a cooking school attached to every county School System.

There is nothing that brings the mental condition of man up to a good high standard like good cooking.

The success of this work in the Boston Schools, Washington, and others is enough to encourage the establishment of such in all Public Schools, and it seems to me that no one can question the appropriateness of placing this as one of the main features of a girl's education.

One woman has said, "none other would have such influence in developing a woman's faculties and dexterity in the direction of manual employment; none other is so intimately associated with her needs, her nature, and her character."

The statement, "a girl is known by her dress," is surely a very true one, for no matter how bright the girl may be; how pretty or modest she

may appear, an ill fitting, untidy dress will spoil the good effect. She can not fill an influential position and possess such qualities.

In the Public School she would be taught to select the right kind of material for her dress, and of a price corresponding to her means; to make it well and keep it neat and clean. She is thus enabled to keep her brother and sisters clothes in repair, that in place of ragged, tattered clothes, we might see well patched garments.

Poor sewing, however is not the only fault we can find with so many of our house keepers of to day. Alas they are poor cooks, one of the worst qualities a woman can possess. Thanks to the untiring efforts of a few, this is being introduced into the Public Schools and before many years shall have passed away, we will have good cooks to beautify our homes.

This is begun in the grammar school and should be taught with well illustrated lectures.

In the Boston schools the girls furnish the material and the result of their labor can be taken home, and in this way their parents may see what they are doing. Each girl is provided with a faintly white apron and cap, and it is surely a pleasant sight to watch them as they busy themselves about their allotted tasks. Of course, the teaching must be sufficiently clear for the beginner.

A knowledge of the physiology, chemistry, and philosophy of food is necessary. As a definition of cooking I will give Ruskin's as it expresses all that a definition can express. He says: "Cooking means the knowledge of Medea and of Circe, and of Calypso, and of the Queen of Sheba. It means the knowledge of all herbs, and fruits, and balms and spices; and of all that is healing and sweet in fields and groves, and savory in meats; It means carefulness and inventiveness, and watchfulness and willingness, and readiness of appliances;

It means the economy of your great grandmothers, and the science of modern chemists; it means much lasting and no wasting; it means English thoroughness and French art, and Arabian hospitality; and it means in fine that you are to be perfectly and always "Ladies Scafgurns" and, as you are to see imperatively that every body has something pretty to wear - so you are to see, yet more imperatively, that every body has something nice to eat." This definition surely expresses the requisites of a good cook.

Many of our young married women have not the slightest idea of how to prepare just enough for two, and of course this results in wastefulness. Could they have had the advantage of taking this course in the Public Schools, they would have gained the desired knowledge, and thus learned to economize.

They would have been taught when to use hot or cold, soft or hard water

for boiling, matters which seem small in themselves, and yet to the housewife ought to be of much importance.

Sir Henry Cole was one of the first advocates of cooking schools and although laughed at for his views, we now see the result and reap the benefits of his untiring efforts.

In Wales the advancement of cooking schools is very great, and last year, in one of the back districts of Northern Scotland, they were carrying in to the school house, a cooking stove, that the work might be begun.

The knowledge the girl gains at school is put into effect at home. Their are kept clean and they are enabled to prepare their food in the most appetizing way.

They are taught the relation of food, how one kind may take the place of another; why and in what way one class of food is better than another. In our land, as a result of poor cooking, dyspepsia prevails,

and not until the wife can place before her husband and family, well cooked, palatable food, will dyspepsia be eradicated.

The scantily of the home is centered about the kitchen stove. Here the health and happiness of humanity lies in the most important state.

One person has said, "So great is the advantage, socially and physiologically, to be derived from this source, that, if they were in no way educational, I would still lay this as a duty on the schools to train every girl within our borders, in these all essential domestic arts. If as Horace Mann says, it is a crime for a girl to grow up in ignorance of reading and writing, what sort of offence is it pray tell, for a girl to grow up in ignorance of cooking and sewing. Think from what kind of homes tens of thousands of our children in the Public Schools, come each morning: rooms disordered and ill kept, amid foul surroundings, presided

over by a mother, who can not decently patch or darn a garment, that is beginning to give away, and who knows only enough of cooking to take the, perhaps abundant material supplied her, and render it by dirty, wasteful, processes, into disagreeable, and indigestible masses, productive of dyspepsia, and scrofula, and provocative of a craving for strong drink. As a mere matter of public safety can we afford to breed such a population in this Republic?"

This ought to be the sentiments of every true citizen.

The upbuilding of good citizenship depends upon it, and it either promotes or deteriorates, as we will it the comfort and decency of our homes.

You say that in taking up cooking and sewing in the public schools the girl will neglect her other studies. but in this you are very much mistaken. She is here securing an intellectual and industrial education which, combined, make her stronger

morally and mentally. Is this not truly a practical education? An education which inspires her with dignity and earnest womanhood in the cares of every day life. Homes made and kept by such as she are the surest safeguards of a nation. They are the main elements in the growth and culture of society.

A few years ago Domestic work was considered degrading. A girl would rather starve than do house work, but public opinion is removing this idea to some extent. Yet today we hear our College Graduates say, "I must teach," but they very seldom speak of work in the Domestic Arts. This is not right. Our schools are now full and overflowing with teachers, and besides, many are not of a suitable disposition for school teaching. It is any public work rather than domestic. This is wrong and not until the child is taught from her baby-hood, to love and cherish the home work, to consider it

the grandest work of woman, will this sentiment be changed.

This can be done by introducing cooking and sewing in the Public Schools. There will then be a gain in prosperity, health, temperance, and domestic happiness.

"The American Mechanic, it is said, owed his position, as leader of the world, to the fact of his readiness to change old ways for new and better ones."

Is it not time the American people were following his example and awakening to a finer appreciation of Domestic Art?