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A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

By KATHERINE E. DOLBEAR.

If women could feel in their own hearts that they are men's equals intellectually and then proceed to show it in their homes instead of spending their whole time trying to prove it to themselves and to men, from the platform and pulpit, we might hope to see some improvement in their educational ideals. At present the stumbling block seems to be that women wish to contest against men rather than to co-operate with them; to try to secure positions which men desire regardless of their fitness for them.

It is not my purpose to show whether or not a woman can fill any worldly position as well as a man. I shall confine my suggestions to woman's education from a biological standpoint. No one can deny that nature intended that every woman should be a mother, and if education is to fit human beings to live their lives most completely physically, mentally and morally, and to do in the world what nature has best fitted them to do, surely a woman's education should teach her to be a skillful housekeeper and a wise mother. To fill such a position well would require as much natural ability, intellectuality, training and original investigation as is required for an A. M. degree. For centuries women were content to play their natural part in the world's life, but, during the last one they have gone to the other extreme, and are most interested in those things which are unessential and artificial.

The ordinary college education is unfitting enough for boys, but much worse for girls who work more diligently and waste upon it the strength which was trusted to them for the race and not for their own selfish selves. Hundreds of girls go to college to be in fashion rather than to get more education; it gives them a feeling of superiority even if they have no scholastic ability. At college they get a generous dose of English, modern languages, history, Greek, Latin and mathematics, and some take more or less science. When they graduate what can they do, and what do they wish to do? Perhaps most of all they desire to be independent, self-supporting and free to do as they please. The easiest and pleasantest way to do this is to teach, especially if they can get positions to teach the languages. Among college graduates there is a strong sentiment

against teaching children;—nothing below a high school position will be considered.

Even the girls who had more or less domestic taste before going to college are likely to have lost it while pursuing the charming culture subjects. They can't waste time washing dishes,—why, they'll get rusty in their Latin, and that will never do. It seems as if college education of to-day tends to unfit a woman for almost every womanly interest.

I will suggest a little course of study to fill the years from fourteen to twenty-three, of a girl's life, which I believe would give her a very different aspect of the world, its duties and pleasures.

At 14 a girl is large, awkward, restless, afraid to talk, especially with older people, desirous of dressing prettily, much affected by what her friends think and say, easily pleased and easily hurt, and is happy and sad at almost the same moment. She rebels against being kept at one thing too long, is quickly interested, but just as quickly turned aside.

What can we do to help her safely over this trying stage? If she is sent to the high school her time will be spent on Latin, algebra, ancient history and English, and perhaps oratory. She detests the Latin, and can't do much with algebra. Unless she has a good verbal memory nearly all the work is hard and uninteresting. Perhaps she dreads the history so she is unable to sleep, then carries her note-book to the breakfast-table so she can study while eating. It comes to be her turn to speak in the elocution class, she can think of nothing else, can eat no breakfast, but hurries off to school with a headache, there she is unable to grasp what is being explained in her classes so intent is her mind on the event of speaking. The hour draws near, her heart pounds harder; the class passes to the oratory room, everything begins to get dark, there is a buzzing sound in her ears; after several have spoken her name is called, somehow she goes to the platform, speaks her piece and returns to her seat with a little feeling of relief, but so exhausted that she can do nothing during the rest of the day.

This is of course rather an extreme case, but I expect that if we knew how many young girls feel, this would not be so uncommon an experience as we might at first think. Are severe strains like this good for her physically? If they are physically bad then they are absolutely bad and should not exist. There are girls who greatly enjoy the work in elocution and who look forward with pleasure to the day when they shall speak from the platform. For such girls it is all right, and an opportunity of expressing themselves in this way should be given. My point is that for a nervous, self-conscious girl it is

harmful, and that instead of overcoming self-consciousness as it claims to, it increases it.

Rather than taking such courses in high school, suppose we allow her to spend some of her time learning to cook, she will probably like to begin by making candy and work gradually toward essentials. This would be a most natural way for her to begin. She would be directly interested in making the candy good, and the result would pay for the effort; then, too, she should at first be encouraged to make only those things which are likely to turn out well. Failure in cooking, when several are disappointed in the result, is most disheartening, and if teased about it she will either want to go off by herself and cry and decide not to try again, or else feel like throwing the whole thing at her brother and telling him he'd better do the cooking himself if he knows so much about it.

If the subject of cooking was properly presented so girls could understand how much the health and happiness of the world depends upon it, they would all want to study it and insist upon being taught. Parents are often largely to blame for the attitude which their daughters assume in these matters. In a Massachusetts high school, of about 600 pupils, the course in cooking was elective and not nearly as well attended as it should have been. The biology teacher tried to influence all of the girls who took her work to take domestic science also. The reasons they gave for not taking it were sometimes quite interesting. Among the more intelligent, interest in the course was expressed, but it had been omitted on account of having a programme so full of compulsory subjects and several intended to take it the next year. One pupil from a less cultured home expressed the opinion of many from similar surroundings in quite definite language. She said she was n't going to be any one's servant, and she didn't have to learn to cook; that when she got through school she'd get married, live in a fine house and have servants to do all such things. I do not believe she would ever have felt so if she had not heard it at home, but her mother was a hard-working woman, and probably anxious to see her daughter in more comfortable surroundings, so she tried to bring her up to feel above all labor.

German or French should be begun, or continued if the pupil was fortunate enough to have been instructed in it earlier. She is ready to get much enjoyment and useful information from botany and zoölogy if they are well taught. Music should be studied if she shows ability in that direction; it helps to express her emotions and to console when she is restless and out of tune with the world. Dancing, too, is of value, for it not only gives expression to the rhythmic sense but helps to make her feel at ease in company and to form habits of conversation and ability

to entertain. To be sure girls often go to extreme with regard to dancing and have almost a mania for it, but I doubt if keeping them from going to dancing school would help any in the matter. If they want to dance they will learn how any way, and the more they are prevented the greater effort will they make. If they received dancing instruction with the same regularity as their music, English and cooking, and saw its proper place in education, they would not carry it to such extreme.

Drawing and painting must not be neglected, if there is taste in either direction, and in connection with art instruction, choice of harmonious shades and tints, or contrasts, ought to be encouraged. The maiden might accompany her mother and have a voice in the selection of carpets, rugs, draperies, and especially her own dress materials. It is the dawn of keen interest in her personal appearance and advantage should be taken to instruct her in tasteful and economical dress. She might help in the making of her clothes with the more simple sewing, and gradually learn to do all by herself, though at 14 she would be likely to get discouraged long before she could finish a dress or even a shirt waist.

One of the most important things at this age is that she have suitable out of door exercise. Long walks which are not merely exercise for its own sake, but with some motive, as studying birds or flowers, playing golf or anything else which will keep her out and give her pleasant occupation. Boating is good exercise for summer, also tree-climbing, and coasting and skating in winter.

At 15 our girl is much more at ease and has a greater power of concentration. She will now sew with greater persistence, will practice dance music for hours so as to interest and be of value to her friends. She likes to dance, and wishes she were grown up so she could go to dancing school in the evening. She feels her importance and wants to possess things, wants a pet to care for, wants her own books and pictures, wants to select things for herself and others; then let her have pets, let her select her own library and have a room of her own to arrange as she likes with the understanding that she is responsible for its care, even the sweeping and washing of windows.

Allow her to cook as many kinds of things as she cares to, but especially to make one thing better than any one else in the house.

She should learn to keep her clothes in repair, and know the best way of mending all kinds of rents and tears and of darning. General instruction in physiology with special reference to hygiene are necessary, and in botany a study of moulds and bacteria would be opportune. The practical physiology work is

one of the most important subjects to be taken, and the student should not only know how to care for her own health, but should be made to do so. She should realize that her first duty in the world is to keep well and strong; to do only as much as possible without over tiring herself, to have great regularity in eating, sleeping and studying, to take plenty of out door exercise, and to have broad enough interests so she will not get despondent over her own little trials and tribulations. German, French, literature and music or art, or both should be continued, with interest as a guide as to the amount of each. Nature study would always be valuable, and if an interest in myth appeared she would learn some of the nature myths so she could tell them to her companions or to children if there was an opportunity. Girls of this age are fond of children, and like the grown up feeling which they have when little folks take hold of their hands to be led to school or across the street. This child love should be encouraged more than it generally is in the school. In the seventh grammar grade of a school near Boston a three year old child was one day brought in to visit for a few minutes. She was prettily dressed, and attracted the attention of the whole class for the moment. As soon as she had gone out the teacher asked how many of the pupils liked babies; all of the girls raised their hands, all of the boys kept theirs down tight, and the school mistress said she must say she agreed with the boys that she did n't like babies either. In telling about it at home one of the boys added—"That's the time the girls got sat on for saying they liked kids." One would hardly expect a child's affections to develop naturally when surrounded for five hours a day by such an atmosphere of bitterness.

For the next three years the same general plan would be followed, adding careful training in breathing and vocal culture, reading aloud, especially poetry, and story telling.

At 18 a tremendous amount of altruism is likely to have developed, and a girl is almost dangerously affectionate. The chances are that she will be in love with some one. At this time she should have more or less care of children, for on them she can spend her affections, and both will be benefited. I'm not quite sure whether it is safe for her to be so much in love with a man. I doubt if he can understand, appreciate and cherish it. Some can, but many cannot, and a girl of eighteen is not capable of judging. A young woman who has arrived at the twenties without having been situated so she could love fine music and art, the multitudinous exquisite forms in nature and the friendship and trust of little children, has been cheated out of half the pleasure of her life. Besides the æsthetic subjects her work in the languages would continue, and sev-

eral of the sciences might be taken up. Much work in physiology should be done, and she could take elementary physics and chemistry, more or less geology and simple astronomy, with as much field work as she could take without becoming fatigued. At 19 she will be ready to begin marketing, be interested in finding how to buy most economically and to make wholesome, palatable dishes from the least expensive food stuffs. She will also be interested in buying household furnishings and learning how to choose good, simple, durable things rather than extremely decorated and painted furniture made of cheap, perishable wood, and shrinkable and fadable materials.

Entertaining is a pleasant occupation which she should learn to do artistically. The chief thing here for her to learn is to accustom herself to discuss those things in which her guests are interested rather than to force upon them her own ideas and opinions. From nineteen on more fine work could be taken up, some fancy work and fine sewing, the cooking of more difficult dishes, planning of meals which would serve right constituents in proper proportions and be inexpensive and appetizing. Recooking foods which are left over requires considerable thought and care, and should receive more attention by American girls, as they are inclined to be wasteful in this respect. In connection with the preparation of foods, artistic serving should also be considered, but there should be as much individuality shown in the dining room as in the library, instead of an attempt to imitate one's neighbors in serving as well as the setting and decorating of the table.

Simple psychology and pedagogy will be valuable to her later, and might well be taken up at this time. If she is bright and natural she will be ready and willing to learn many children's games so she can enter into them and play and teach children to play them.

Her previous work in sewing should have prepared her to do good dressmaking by this time; to cut and fit her own clothes and to make over those which are out of style or need to be turned. The continual change in styles causes one of the most perplexing problems with which a woman has to deal. Unless she has a good income to spend upon her dress it is very necessary that she be able to do considerable in this line.

The latter part of the time would be spent in learning to care for persons during sickness; to know the symptoms of all the common diseases, especially those of children, the effects of various kinds of medicine, how to bandage all kinds of burns, cuts and sores, to restore consciousness after fainting and drowning, to give right antidotes for poisons, to keep charts of temperature and pulse, to understand the origin of the diseases

and means for prevention of spread, to prepare proper foods for invalids and how to keep the sick room bright and sweet and cheerful, doing just those things which shall be a relief to the patient, and knowing what not to do and when to leave him alone. During this whole period literature, music and art would be continued, also walking and learning more of nature's secrets. To complete the educational work a year of travel would be most beneficial; so that the young woman might see her country and feel more or less familiar with its different sections, its people and their various ways of looking at things. She would be less likely to think her way the only way, and in many respects she would learn to be more tolerant of the opinions of others and their modes of life.

In this discussion I have left out most of the subjects as they are now pursued in the public schools and colleges, but there is no objection to girls electing whatever subjects they choose, mathematics, Hebrew or Chinese, providing that the subject will not draw them from their natural and normal interests. If by studying mathematics the girl comes to think she is brighter than the rest of woman kind and that she is really too intelligent to waste her life in a humble little home, then it would have been better for her and for the race if she had never heard of mathematics. The race must continue, and there must be homes and mothers, and whatever tends to prevent either is bad for the world and ought to be cast away.

The new woman should be educated and cultured and refined, and she ought to have as much education as she can have without hurting herself physically or destroying her interest in her home. Why should she not take all the art, music, literature and nature, and enrich her home with it; not go out in search of it for its own sake, but for the sake of her home, to bring it in, to fill her home with all that is best and happiest in the world; to make it the center of attraction.

When woman can learn this and execute it, then many of the hard struggles of the world will be lightened. She will be able to live more economically, so her husband will not feel obliged to labor every day in the year, and then perhaps steal in order to keep her wants supplied. He will not need to do so much, so there will be labor for more and less would be in a destitute condition.

Understanding something of her child's education during the first three or four years she would not entrust him to the care of a nurse, but would consider it her highest and divinest duty to start the little one up in the world with only the best.

If, as must certainly be the case in Massachusetts, some of these ideally educated girls do not come to have their own homes and children, they will be well prepared to teach in the

schools where they are most needed, that is, in the primary grades. How many hundreds of little folks go to school and are misunderstood in every way by the teacher who does n't care for children anyway, but is teaching because she must support herself, and in the primary grade because she cannot get a higher grade.

The world needs women with a sympathetic love and understanding of children more than it needs women preachers, philosophers, scientists, temperance cranks and women's rights freaks. If girls were properly educated, the present condition would soon right itself, and we should see prettily dressed young mothers devoted to the care of their children instead of elaborately gowned, childless women lavishing their time and affections on poodle dogs.