

Special Papers.

AN IDEAL EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

BY MAY MACKINTOSH.

No ideal is practical at the first moment of its inception; no ideal springs, armed at all points, from the brain of its creator, as did Minerva from the head of Jove. Each ideal, as a block of marble, must pass under the developing touch of the sculptor Experience, before its value can be proved and the difficulties in its path duly estimated. But still, without ideals, even if not immediately practical, the civilization of the world would soon come to a standstill; and, therefore, there will always be some who, without despising the old, are ready also to reach forward to the new and untried; and it is to such that the present article principally addresses itself.

The subject under consideration naturally divides itself into the three following questions, with their corresponding answers:—

1. What is our present ideal of the education of girls?

2. Are the means employed for its carrying out in every detail suitable and sufficient?

3. Presupposing the full attainment of this ideal, is there any possibility of future improvement?

Now, as to the first of these questions, *What is our present ideal?* That it is intellectually higher for girls and women as a class than that of a century ago, no one will deny. True, there were talented and remarkable women then; but these were exceptions, not the rule. But, when the housewifely talents of each period are considered, there seems to be some falling off in this respect in the later one. The tendency of the former period was to produce "notable housewives"; that of the latter is to give us women doctors, lawyers, speakers, writers, and generally well-educated women; but women who have little or no knowledge of household affairs. A tendency—be it observed—for, while there are women who neglect everything for intellectual culture, yet there are still many who keep up the traditions of their grandmothers right nobly.

Still, the young girl, during school-life, and especially before graduating, is excused from household duties, as of comparatively little importance. "She has so many lessons!" This must have a tendency to exalt school knowledge unduly, and to lessen her estimation of what she is asked to learn in relation to home and its comforts. Here, also, the moral element enters; if home—first her parents, and then, in due time, her own—is not the place of all others in which she wishes to shine, her character cannot fail to lose some of the most important elements of true womanliness.

Small things show the direction of the wind; and when we see beautiful young girls and women coming down to breakfast with hair in papers, and in slovenly attire, we may assume that home is at least not their best loved and honored place. These habits are, unfortunately, by no means confined to the lowest ranks of society; and, through the carelessness and thoughtlessness of many who do not consider their full meaning, are still becoming more and more prevalent.

The present ideal, then, seems to tend to the exaltation of the intellectual above the domestic in practice; although many might not allow it, if the question were squarely put to them.

We come, now, to our second question: Are the means employed to secure this ideal adequate for the purpose? Never before were such liberal opportunities for the acquirement of knowledge vouchsafed to women. Colleges have opened their doors, and no young girl, who feels a desire to continue her studies beyond the usual course, need feel disheartened as to ways and means of gaining the coveted end.

Even from a monetary point of view, always the last factor in the progress of improvement, the outlook is brighter. Woman's intellectual work, now, is more adequately paid than ever before; though it has not as yet reached the standard of equal payment for an equal amount of work done, without regard to sex. Taking the ideal of the majority, and not that of the exceptional thinkers, therefore, it would seem safe to assume that the means at our disposal are fairly adequate to the end in view.

But our third question begins by presupposing the full attainment of this ideal of the majority, and then asks: Is there room for improvement? In answering this question in the affirmative, it suggests and requires answers to two others.

(a) What are the proposed improvements?

(b) How can they be carried out?

First, then, *What are proposed improvements?* Some of them are already adopted here and there; but this article must be understood as referring to a scheme applicable to general use. The first point to be made is that girls, as well as boys, have a physical nature in addition to their mental and moral natures; and that exercise, and plenty of it, is as essential to the well-being of the one sex as the other.

The second point is, that there should be such a co-education of the sexes, both in and out of school—and to this end, the parents must co-operate cordially with the teacher, if there is to be any good result—that the relation between all boys and girls should be healthy and natural. A little, *but not too much*, consideration of the girls as to be taken care of, on the boy's side; and a development of fortitude and courage on the side of the girls, should be the result.

Boys and girls should have as many pursuits as possible in common. The beginnings of scientific research—as in after-school hunts after all the different kinds of trees in their vicinity, or in all the habits, etc., of the common animals, which they can observe and report on—are invaluable, as neither being too effeminate for the boy, nor too boisterous for the girl. Such constant association in work and play will go far toward preventing the premature sweet-hearting which so shortens the time set apart by Nature for the full and quiet development needed for the production of relatively perfect men and women.

This aping, by children, of their elders is the result of empty heads, and nothing worth doing with their time; but children who are rightly educated have not enough time for the enjoyment of all the wonderful things daily brought under their notice, and they certainly have not time to anticipate anything, however interesting, in the future, when the present is so full.

In the exciting climate of America, and the still more exciting influences of business and social life, the great difficulty is to prevent our children growing up too fast—a difficulty proportionally greater with girls, inasmuch as their nervous excitability exceeds that of boys.

These points are suited to the first eleven or twelve years of a girl's life, according to her development; in fact, the education should be identical for both sexes up to this age. Both boys and girls should have certain household duties assigned to them, no matter how much additional service is paid for, or how large the establishment may be. We should not train our children to despise honest labor or those who perform it. If we tell the boys stories of the menial services performed by the pages and squires of old, before their knighthood, labor need not, and will not, seem degrading. Besides, only a worker can feel for those who work, and so learn, for the after-years, the secret of wisely governing them.

But now we are approaching the time when the girl is

"Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet."

A great change, physical and mental, is before her. A wise mother, or—failing that greatest gift of God—a motherly friend, must tell her somewhat of the mysteries underlying life, and of the full, plain meanings of the life in families, hitherto recognized as a fact without realization of what its import might be.

Henceforth, the purpose of her education should be to lead her to *consecrate* herself—no weaker word will do—to the fulfilment of God's purpose in making her a woman. She must feel that she must take care of her body—not selfishly, but because, if her life be a completed one, she will one day be a wife and mother; and, therefore, dare not squander health which does not belong to herself alone. She must make the most of the special talents she possesses in obedience to the same guiding principle which makes her prepare herself to be a helpmate to her husband and a wise mother to her children. And, though the vocation of some

women leads them out into the world to work, there are few who would not be infinitely richer by the possession of a knowledge of the domestic arts which make home comfortable and worthy its name.

The transition from girl to woman is, then, no slight change easily passed by. It is the turning-point of the life—a point that influences the subsequent character more than we give it credit for. All great changes are the outcome of long, quiet development, if they are to be beneficial. Do we recognize this fact? Or, rather, is not this the time when parties, increased studies, and increased emulation, keep the nerves at an abnormal tension? Are the results of this course satisfactory? How many girls break down, not because their intellects are over-taxed, but that their brains being developed and their bodies neglected, the inevitable adjustment of the balance follows.

Now, if a girl at this period were kept at home for from one to two years, and taught how to manage a house in all its details, as the principal acquirement she was expected to make: if, in addition, she were encouraged to continue her investigations in natural history, drawing from nature, wherever possible; if the standard works of literature, beginning with good novels and portions of the poems of Spenser and Sir Walter Scott, were brought under her notice—not as subject-matter for diagrams, but as educative of a sound literary taste; if, occasionally, she was taken to the finest concerts and operas, or on excursions to different factories, where the whole process of manufacture, from beginning to end, might be seen and understood—would she lose much, or, indeed, anything, when compared, after half-a-dozen years had passed away, with the girl who had graduated two years before her?

No; the girl so trained, so shielded and surrounded by home influences at the most impressive time of her life, would for ever bless the true kindness and wisdom that so decided for her. Let us have all the intellectual development of the present time doubled, and trebled, if that be possible; but let us not lose the womanliness which will add another charm to the most varied acquirements. Of course, for the great army of working girls, this ideal must be modified to suit the circumstances; but its adoption by the more favored sisters would not be without its reaction benefiting all.

The great problem of the present day will be solved when women learn to receive the high privileges now accorded them without losing the virtues they have inherited from the past. No fitter summing up of the whole matter can be found than that contained in the noble words of Tennyson:—

"The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free:
For she that out of Lethe scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,
Stays all the fair young planet in her hands,—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more alone,—
Our place is much: as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding her,—
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up, but drag her down,—
Will leave her space to bourgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood."

—Education.

MANY a foe is a friend in disguise,
Many a trouble a blessing most true,
Helping the heart to be happy and wise,
With love ever precious and joys ever new.

—Tupper.

A FARMER, bringing his son as a pupil was asked by the schoolmaster what he intended to make of the lad.

"Well, if he gets grace, we'll make him a minister."

"Ah!" returned the schoolmaster, "if he gets no grace, what then?"

"Then," said the father, "he maun just become a schulemaister like yerself."