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THE EDUCATOR

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THE CO-EDUCATION OF THE SEXES.

To what extent should the sexes be educated together? Is there any limit within the scope of our educational agencies at which the simultaneous instruction of boys and girls should cease? These questions deserve a more deliberate and careful examination by educators generally than they have yet received. If the well-being of society demands that the sexes should be educated together, then it is wrong to separate them in our schools. If otherwise, then the co-education of the sexes is equally wrong and impolitic.

Practically, the sentiments of our people are divided upon the subject; for we have schools for each of the sexes, and for both. So far as our common-school system is concerned, no distinction is made between the sexes in respect of their educational advantages, save in a limited number of cases in cities where some of the grammar and high school departments are arranged for the separate accommodation of boys and girls. Generally, in our public schools the two receive simultaneous instruction, and are brought under the influence of the same teachers. Why should not this plan universally prevail, and why should it not be continued throughout the

entire course of training to which the young are subjected? There seem to be no objections which cannot be obviated by suitable accommodations and appliances. In a truly good school, under accomplished teachers, there certainly can be no serious impediment in the way of this simultaneous education. Any objection, therefore, which would lie against the combined plan would be equally strong when applied to a separate one.

Let us consider briefly the facts which have a bearing upon the questions under discussion.

1. The school is designed for and ought to be an instrumentality for preparing the young for the duties of life. In actual life the sexes are and ever ought to be together. They co-exist in the family, they mingle in the social gathering, in the church, in the street, everywhere. Why, then, should they be separated in the school? The mutual influence of the sexes over each other is everywhere a powerful aid and incentive to both in their respective spheres of duty; and nowhere is it more so than in the school. The duties of life are comprised in the work of the family, in the amenities of the social circle, and in the offices pertaining to the citizen and the Christian. In these duties the sexes are called upon mutually to bear a part. There is here no isolation and no exclusiveness, while here, too, they have need of mutual sympathy and support. Why do they not equally require the mutual stimulus of each other's presence and efforts in the course of preparation for these duties?

2. Men and women possess the same order of faculties. And in general they require the stimulus of the same order of truths for the proper development of these faculties. Indeed, the social element of our nature can be developed only by the mutual influence of the sexes. And is social education to be neglected in our schools? Are the manners and the personal habits of the sexes to be left untrained for? Indeed, may we not find one of the best explanations of the lack of discipline and of the rough and often riotous

demeanor of young men in our higher institutions in the absence of the refining and subduing influence of woman? Has it been proved by experience that in this isolated state the sexes make greater progress either in mental discipline or moral growth? Has not experiment rather established the reverse of this proposition? We are social beings. It is not wise to ignore this fact in our arrangements for the training of youth for the social state. It is not good for either man or woman to be alone. And this truth is verified in the history alike of our colleges and our female seminaries. No one that has had experience in college life will dispute the demoralizing tendency of thus isolating young men from the benign influence which springs from the presence and society of women. Nor would the history of exclusively female schools, if made known, afford to the philosophic educator results any more encouraging or satisfactory. Clandestine communications, secret meetings, and lapses from truth and duty are the legitimate fruits of violated social laws. The science of truancy should not constitute an element in the courses of training pursued in our schools. But such seems to be the case in these exclusive and one-sided plans for the education of youth.

The argument for the simultaneous education of the sexes, in our higher schools, derives strong support from actual experience. There are scores of able and successful educators in our country whose testimony concurs in favor of the highly salutary influence of the sexes, not only upon each other, but upon the discipline of the school. For the most part all well-regulated institutions of this character are self-governing. Breaches of good order, riots, and midnight revels are unknown in their history. Intrigues and clandestine communications are almost as rare in them, because there is no temptation to such conduct: the school is made to conform to the laws of human nature governing the intercourse of rational beings in a refined and cultivated society. The schools in which both sexes are educated conform to the con-