

THE PRIVATE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

BY MRS. SYLVANUS REED.

NO subject has been so prolific in themes for essayists, historians, philosophers, and critics of all civilized nations as that of education. The founders of this commonwealth gave it their earliest attention, and American literature of the latter half of the seventeenth, and of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries vies with that of England and continental Europe in the value and interest of its contributions to that subject. Every State in the Union has been generous to the public schools—munificent individuals have built and endowed with lavish hands universities and colleges for young men, and within the last two decades woman has had doled out to her, with great reluctance, with much reserve, and many misgivings, some of the crumbs which fall from the tables of the great universities. And four colleges, exclusively for women, have been built and generously endowed.

The question as to her capacity to receive this blessing is not yet decided, and the fear that it will subvert the purposes of nature and unfit her for the functions of domestic life is finding nervous and incoherent expression in the periodical literature and after-dinner speeches of the day. Meanwhile there is a great and powerful arm of the educational force of this country which has no literature, no written history, which is seldom referred to by periodical, scientist, or the orator of the day, except in some flippant allusion to point a moral or adorn a tale—this is the "*Private School for Girls*."

For two hundred years this institution has held a dignified and responsible place in the educational and social system of this country. To

this the American woman, such as she has been in times past, and such as we find her to-day, owes the character, the culture, the grace, and the embellishments which enable her to take her stand, not blushing for her ignorance or her stupidity, side by side, with the cultivated and representative woman of other countries.

It has no favour from the State. Being private property it cannot hold endowments; it has paid its own taxes and supported itself. European educators have marvelled that American writers should leave the world to learn by accident that American ladies were not all educated in their famous public schools. The French Commissioner of Education to the Centennial Exhibition, whom I afterwards met, could not forgive the committee which waited on him in New York that it had not afforded him an opportunity to visit the schools in which the accomplished women whom he had met in this country were trained. He requested the circulars, rules, schedules of study, and whatever records and literature of interest had grown out of my school to be transmitted officially to him. Mr. Bryce, in his "*American Commonwealth*," though his interesting chapter upon the "*Position of Women*," notices the facilities offered by the State for the education of girls and the eagerness with which they are accepted, makes no reference to private schools, except that in a foot-note of two lines the existence of such schools in the Eastern States is mentioned.

I have been asked to give to the current history of the day a sketch of one of these schools. But to give the history of a battle before time has adjusted events and incidents to the