

*Special Papers.*SHOULD THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS
DIFFER FROM THAT OF BOYS?

BY MARY E. CARDWELL.

WAIVING the irrelevant, though interesting and much discussed, question of the relative brain weight of the sexes, is there any good reason why the intellectual training of girls should differ from that thought proper for boys?

A century ago very little provision was made for the education of girls. If they could read and write, and had a slight acquaintance with French and music, they were called accomplished. Yet this poor little pretence of learning was considered of no importance in comparison with a knowledge of household affairs. To be illiterate was then no special disgrace to a woman, but something like infamy rested upon her if she failed to be a good cook, seamstress, or housekeeper.

When girls' schools were first started, the art of sewing, at least, was given, often, if not always, a prominent place in the curriculum. A girls' school without lessons in the use of the needle could scarcely have been regarded otherwise than as something of a monstrosity, because wanting in that strictly womanly element which should mark it as a school for the gentler sex. These suggestions in respect to the spirit of "ye olden time" are dwelt upon to give pertinence to the evolution that has taken place in one brief century.

The eagerness with which girls devoted themselves to the acquisition of book knowledge, when they were given the opportunity to go beyond the scant pastures of a primary education, seems to have occasioned general alarm. Even learned men feared the consequence of learning in women. Nor were their facilities for anything like a higher education gained without a most painful struggle. The epithet "blue stocking" implied almost every unwomanly characteristic, and the possibility of almost every action from which a modest woman shrinks. Women to become learned in the "good old days," had to impale themselves upon the spikes of public opinion, or in milder terms, to endure a certain contempt, and even something like ostracism for their heroism. Educated women are now becoming so common that a few years hence a girl without a diploma of some kind, will probably be something of a phenomenon.

Woman's prompt, and, as a rule, good use of her facilities for education, prove her innate love of learning. Her intellectual ability has been placed beyond question by the many learned women which this century has produced. Her greatly increased usefulness, especially since women's colleges and girls' schools of a high order have been founded, demonstrates, at least by implication, the great worth of the much talked of "higher education" to woman's character and influence.

Yet not a few contend that because of the usually different life-duties of the sexes, their mental training should differ. There is some cogency in such reasoning, if we look upon education simply as a preparation, in a purely material, or technical sense, for the distinctive duties of men, and of women; that is, to make men bread-winners, and women home-keepers.

Doctor Lord, whose beautiful lectures really show an old-fashioned, chivalrous regard for women, says, "A woman should be educated to be interesting, 'useful at home,' etc." "She should be taught to become the friend and help-mate of man, never his rival." He deprecates the fact that women are sometimes forced to adopt the callings of men, and to prevent this catastrophe he advises all women "to pursue some one art—like music, or painting, or decoration," "for proficiency in these arts belongs as much to the sphere of women as to men, since it refines and cultivates them." Are these words what many will feel tempted to call them, merely the expression of obsolete ideas? By no means. Within a stone's throw of any one who reads this essay, it may be said most confidently, will be found persons with still more backward visions than Doctor Lord's.

It is a commonly, perhaps a usually accepted view, that the chief end of a woman's school education is refinement; that of a man, practical utility. How else can we account for the practice in many "well-to-do" families of sending the girls to high schools and colleges, while the boys are permitted

to grow up in a great degree uneducated? For what other reasons are art and music, or accomplishments, still thought more suitable for girls than for boys? Why else are girls still allowed to neglect solid, intellectual acquirements for the sake of these so-called accomplishments?

Ideal education is the development of the individual, and no doubt the best results can be attained only by the individual training of every boy and of every girl. Until the millennium and the perfection of all things come a little nearer, however, children will of necessity be educated in masses, and natural aptitudes can be only in a measure considered. But while an ideal standard in methods is so slowly approached, as to seem sometimes little more than a fair dream of a far distant future, it is consoling to know that the greatest aim of all systems of education is, after all, the formation of character. With this aim in view, it is difficult to understand why the question of sex should enter into education.

Is it not just as important to boys as to girls to be gentle, thoughtful, tender, and virtuous? Is it not as important to girls as to boys to be honest, prompt in keeping engagements, self-helpful, and useful? Why should not the study of the classics give the same fine literary tastes, deep culture, and peculiar mental development to the one sex as to the other? Why should not the same discipline of mind, and development of practical sense, accrue alike to both sexes from the study of mathematics?

Why should not girls as well as boys be given the benefit of lessons, so important to life, and acquire the same habits of accuracy, to be learned from the thorough study of natural science, in *all* of its branches? Why, again, should not boys, whose usual life experiences make the saving influence of personal refinement peculiarly necessary, be taught music, French, drawing, decorative art, and other things supposed to be so important in the education of a refined young lady?

The only good objection to a similarity of teaching for both sexes, ever brought forward, is that girls have not the requisite strength for a thorough collegiate education; yet this objection is a sentimental one, and has no real existence in fact. It is controverted daily by experiences requiring of women the utmost physical endurance, which is, it seems superfluous to state, the special kind of strength necessary for the acquisition of book-knowledge.—*Education.*

BOOKS.

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

SOUTHEY tells us that in his walk, one stormy day, he met an old woman, to whom, by the way of greeting, he made the rather obvious remark that it was dreadful weather. She answered, philosophically, that in her opinion "any weather was better than none." I should be half inclined to say that any reading was better than none, allaying the crudeness of the statement by the Yankee proverb which tells us that, though "all deacons are good, there's odds in deacons." Among books, certainly, there is much variety of company. Ranging from the best to the worst, from Plato to Zola, and the first lesson in reading well is that which teaches us to distinguish between literature and merely printed matter. The choice lies wholly with ourselves. We have the key put into our hands; shall we unlock the pantry or the oratory? There is a Wallachian legend, which, like most of the figments of popular fancy, has a moral in it. One Bakala, a good-for-nothing kind of fellow in his way, having had the luck to offer a sacrifice especially well pleasing to God, is taken up into heaven. He finds the Almighty sitting in something like the best room of a Wallachian peasant's cottage—there is something profoundly pathetic in the homeliness of the popular imagination, forced, like the princess in the fairy tale, to weave its semblance of gold tissue out of straw. On being asked what reward he desires for the good services he has done, Bakala, who had always passionately longed to be the owner of a bag-pipe, seeing a half worn-out one lying among some rubbish in a corner of the room, begs eagerly that it may be bestowed on him. The Lord, with a smile of pity at the meanness of his choice, grants him his boon, and Bakala goes back to earth delighted with his prize. With an infinite possibility within his reach, with the choice of wisdom, of power, of beauty at his tongue's end, he asked according to

his kind, and his sordid wish is answered with a gift as sordid.

Yes, there is a choice in books as in friends, and the mind sinks or rises to the level of its habitual society; is subdued, as Shakespeare says of the dyer's hands, to what it works in. Cato's advice, *cum bonis ambula*, consort with the good, is quite as good if we extend it to books, for they, too, insensibly give away their own nature to the mind that converses with them. They either beckon upward or drag down. And it is certainly true that the material of thought reacts upon thought itself. Shakespeare himself would have been commonplace had he been pad-locked in a thinly-shaven vocabulary, and Phidias, had he worked in wax, only an inspired Mrs. Jarley. A man is known, says the proverb, by the company he keeps, and not only so, but made by it.

Milton makes his fallen angels grow small to enter the infernal council room, but the soul, which God meant to be the spacious chamber where high thoughts and generous aspirations might commune together, shrinks and narrows itself to the measure of the meaner company that is wont to gather there, hatching conspiracies against our better selves. We are apt to wonder at the scholarship of the men of three centuries ago and at a certain dignity that characterizes them. They were scholars because they did not read so many things as we. They had fewer books, but these were of the best. Their speech was noble, because they lunched with Plutarch and supped with Plato. We spend as much time over print as they did, but instead of communing with the choice thoughts of choice spirits, and unconsciously acquiring the grand matter of that supreme society, we diligently inform ourselves and cover the continent with a network of speaking wires to inform us of such inspiring facts as that a horse belonging to Mr. Smith ran away on Wednesday, seriously damaging a carryall; that a son of Mr. Brown swallowed a hickory nut on Thursday, and that a gravel bank caved in and buried Mr. Robinson alive on Friday. Alas, it is we ourselves that are getting buried alive under this avalanche of earthly impertinences! It is we who, while we might each in his humble way be helping our fellows in the right path, or adding one block to the climbing spire of a fine soul, are willing to become mere sponges saturated from the stagnant goose-ponds of village gossip.

One is sometimes asked by young people to recommend a course of reading. My advice would be that they should confine themselves to the supreme books in whatever literature, or, still better, choose some one great author, and make themselves thoroughly familiar with him. For, as all roads lead to Rome, so do they likewise lead away from it, and you will find that, in order to understand perfectly and weigh exactly any vital piece of literature, you will be gradually and pleasantly persuaded to excursions and explorations of which you little dreamed when you began, and find yourselves scholars before you are aware. For remember that there is nothing less profitable than scholarship, nor anything more wearisome in the attainment. But the moment you have a definite aim, attention is quickened, the mother of memory, and all that you acquire groups and arranges itself in an order that is lucid, because everywhere and always it is in intelligent relation to a central object of constant and growing interest.

This method also forces upon us the necessity of thinking, which is, after all, the highest result of all education. For what we want is not learning, but knowledge—that is, the power to make learning answer its true end as a quickener of intelligence and a widener of our intellectual sympathies. I do not mean to say that every one is fitted by nature or inclination for a definite course of study, or indeed for serious study in any sense. I am quite willing that these should "browse in a library," as Dr. Johnson called it, to their heart's content. It is, perhaps, the only way in which time may be profitably wasted. But desultory reading will not make a "full man," as Bacon understood it, of one who has not Johnson's memory, his power of assimilation, and, above all, his comprehensive view of the relation of things. "Read not," says Lord Bacon, in his *Essay of Studies*, "to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be