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What Should Women Study ?

BY J. SCOTT RUSSELL.

Home is an English word, an English thought; it is the place of the family; the fireside and the scene of family life, of family birth, growth, culture. English life grows and shines hidden in the bosom of the family.

When, therefore, I speak of the occupation of a woman, I speak of her occupation in her sphere of "home administration." Man does his work abroad, without, in the world, in the crowd; woman's work is to organize, regulate, animate, illuminate home. There is her sphere, and in it she has work, duty, labor to do; industry, art, skill to exercise; intelligence, knowledge, to develop. Education is required, special in its object; training in arduous work, method in execution, technical education.

Woman's technical work is the organization and fulfilment of the duties of home life; and we must first examine the nature of these duties, before we can talk of the education and training they require.

The foundation of the home is marriage; the husband founds or finds the home; he brings his wife "home." He provides there shelter and comfort; and happiness is what he hopes always to find there. *She* has to make *that*. Henceforth his duties lie out of doors; hers lie indoors. He earns or gains their living abroad. He brings his earnings home weekly, monthly, yearly;

that is his business. His wife's is, to spend that money—well, or ill?

The programme then of a woman's technical duty is simply this: How shall I spend my husband's earnings in our joint home, so as to make it yield him and us the best fruit? How shall I turn these hard-won earnings to best account?

"How to administer given earnings in the wisest, homely, household way"—that is a technical question, wanting some knowledge, teaching, training, education.

The money of a home has to provide for health, amusement, instruction. It has to provide fire, clothes, food, drink, music, reading, comeliness, knowledge, training, refinement.

Ought an English wife to know any thing about fuel or not? Should she know that there is good and bad coal?—that what is sold to her as best coal is oftener bad coal than good?—that bad coal produces smoke and flame and not heat, and that the one wastes money and the other uses it? Ought a woman to know this knowledge, or is it beneath her?

I must answer once for all, that I do not think any household knowledge of this sort is beneath any well-born woman. When of two things you have to choose, whether you will do the better or the worse, it seems to me you have a grave responsibility. It seems to me, if you choose the worse, or don't choose, you are to blame. It seems to me, then, that a woman should know good coal from bad, or she may waste her husband's earnings. But next, if she buys only the best coal, comes the question: Is there a right way of using the coal and a wrong?

Ought an English wife to know how to use good coal; to use it to the purpose for which it is bought; to use it for light, cheerfulness, ventilation, warmth, cookery, cleanliness; or to use it to waste, smoke, discomfort? Is any knowledge necessary for that? Cannot anybody make a good fire?—keep a good fire, prevent smoke, maintain cheerful heat, warmth without waste?

Verily, there are few women who know this: the art to make, to maintain a good fire without excess, without waste, without smoke. Much science goes to understand a fire. 1. What is fuel made of? 2. What feeds the fire? 3. What wastes the fire? 4. What regulates the fire? 5. What makes flame? 6. What wastes heat? 7. What preserves and maintains heat? 8. What spreads it equally round a room? 9. What creates smoke, draughts, rheumatism, and colds?