

Vocational Training for Women

AN APPRECIATION OF DR. ROBERTSON'S ADDRESS

By Flora MacDonald Denison

Sunday World, Feb. 15th, 1914

FEW addresses delivered in Toronto this winter—and there have been many notable speakers here—are comparable in importance to the one made by Dr. Robertson a week ago.

His subject was vocational training for women, and could what he preached be lived in practice in a few years society would be revolutionized and a new and more civilized era ushered in.

Many have written and talked along the lines recommended by Dr. Robertson, but none could command the attention of the public as he does, clothed as he is with the authority given him by the Dominion Government to investigate conditions here and in other lands and report the same and make recommendations to remedy conditions as we have them.

That Dr. Robertson thoroughly understands the conditions and that he is able to recommend the remedy, makes him invaluable to this country.

In Canada, there are 400,000 women who work for wages, exclusive of women doing their own housework, who may or may not get paid for what they do. Forty thousand, or 10 per cent. of the total, are in Toronto.

Of this vast army, a very limited number have been trained for their work. They have had to pick it up in a hit-and-miss fashion, with the consequence that too many get discouraged and fall by the wayside, leaving bad-tempered and disappointed employers all along the road. If the trustees of a school advertise for a teacher, the applicant for the position can produce a certificate of efficiency, but if a factory advertises for hands, or a housekeeper advertises for help, applicants come along, and all that can be done is to take them on trial, and see what they are worth. Sometimes the girl makes good, but often, after heart-breaking (and sometimes dish-breaking) experiences, the contract is broken, and the girl and employer try their luck again.

It takes \$7 a week to keep a person just above the actual want line, and yet hundreds of our girls are working in Toronto at from \$2 to \$5 a week, with the result that they are in want. They can neither have proper food, clothing, or housing for that money.