

into the mind in a given time. Instead of training it to yield a fruitage of its own, we make it a dummy upon which we exhibit the fruit of other minds. But we teachers are not without excuse in this matter; for the standard has been applied to us and we have to submit to be measured by it. I believe there is not one of us who if left to ourselves, and to the full exercise of our own judgment, but would act in this matter very differently from what we do. I think we must all feel at times that we are cramming a good deal for the sake of show. We are not our own masters. There are those who engage us and they measure us by this false standard; they judge of us by the number of pupils we are able to grind up and cram sufficiently to pass the next examination for promotion, no matter at what cost to their physical and mental health—and the examination itself, from the ground travelled over and the nature of the questions, renders cramming essential. The system of cramming is emblazoned in unmistakable characters on all our examinations, from that of the pupil up to that of the teacher. Take up almost any examination paper and you will find traces of it. A man's capacity to teach geography, for example, is tested by his ability or non-ability to name and fix the locality of some out-of-the-way, unimportant place, the name of which he might never meet with in a life time of extensive reading. But this evil extends still higher. It is interwoven with our very system, it is apparent in our regulations and programme of studies. It is a great and crying evil. It is the main defect in our system, and it must be remedied or our system of education will, to a greater or less extent, prove a delusion and a snare. Like all other evils it can only be remedied by being exposed and opposed. It is therefore the duty of every teacher to set his face resolutely against it, and instead of asking himself: How can I best fit my pupils for passing the next examination? How can I best fit them for becoming useful members of society? How can I best stir up for them a thirst for knowledge and arm them with the power of acquiring it? Teaching is a noble profession if we will only rise to the true dignity of it; unless we do so our labor, "will prove the blasted fruitage of an imperfect harvest." If we are to rise to the true dignity of our profession, we must ever keep before us what ought to be the highest aim of every teacher and what constitutes the true education, viz: the development and culture of the mind. We must steadily set our faces against cramming in all its forms. Education is a plant of slow growth and withers under hot-house forcing. Cramming is enticing, because it is comparatively easy and showy. An avenue of living shade trees cannot be produced in a day, but an avenue of artificial trees may be erected in a day, and for a brief time it may be more showy and grand than the former, but its glory soon departs and leaves only a mass of rubbish behind. It is comparatively easy for the teacher to make a show by cramming, but very soon the naked deformity of puerility will be seen peering through foliage which has no living root. One word in conclusion, we must ever bear in mind that that, and that only, can be called true culture which embraces the whole man. There are two grand departments in the human mind, viz: the intellectual and moral, and there can be no true education of the former when the latter is neglected. To cultivate the intellectual faculties where the moral are neglected and then call that educating the child, is as vain as it would be to attempt to swell the ocean with a drop, marry immortality with death, or fill infinity with an unsubstantial shade.—*Our Home Companion*.

THE POSITION AND INFLUENCE OF FEMALE TEACHERS.*

BY ISABELLA L. CHALMERS, ABERDEEN.

I am sorry that it should be an absolute necessity for me to apologise for my appearance here before you to-day. Yet so stringent are the conventionalities with which we are surrounded that I feel I am bound to give some reason for my temerity in breaking through them. My appearance here is owing chiefly to two causes. The first arose from perusing a short article in the *Educational News*, in which the ladies were exhorted to come forward and take their proper share in the work of aiding educa-

tional progress and reform. I had often thought that such an appeal was very much needed. We ladies stand far too much on a false delicacy in this matter. If we can do anything to help or cheer our fellow-workers, we are acting selfishly and wrongly if we refrain from doing it, though we may only be exhibiting our own shortcomings, for even from the knowledge of these some tired spirit may be helped "to take heart again," seeing that others have had failures and yet survived them, that others have had the same doubts, difficulties, and trials to contend with, and yet have achieved a fair measure of success. And if we do know a few things, or *think* we know them, should we hug them as the miser hugs his gold? Nay let us rather remember that the quality of knowledge, like that of mercy, is not strained, but is also twice blessed, blessing both the one who gives and the one who receives. The second cause of my appearance is owing to a grievous lament which our worthy secretary has often given forth in my hearing, as to the difficulty of finding gentlemen *willing or able*, (I am not sure which was the word) to give papers at our monthly meetings. As we ladies have the pleasure of profiting from time to time by listening to the potent wisdom evolved from the brains of our fellow-workers of the sterner sex, I thought it would be no more than just if some of us should give them the chance of letting their brains lie fallow for a month, and allow them to have a little recreation in listening to the lighter ideas of our inferior minds, just as we often seek relaxation from graver studies in the frothy materials of a novel. I believe that in taking the step I do in appearing before you to-day, I am only the pioneer of others, who will certainly follow, and as the pioneer is always surpassed by those who come after, so I believe it will be in the present case, and before long our secretary will be being besought by some of the gentlemen for a *chance* of reading a paper, as they will be almost *hors de combat* by these irrepressible women.

Before alluding to the present position of female teachers, I would like, in a few words, to refer to my earliest knowledge of female teaching. I am sorry, nay, perhaps glad, to have to say that I made my *debut* as a scholar a few years too far on in the present century to give it as a reminiscence, but I have a lively recollection of the eagerness with which I listened to the description of the school at which some of my brothers and sisters had received the rudiments of their education. The mistress in question rejoiced in the name of "Meggie Branners." Her humble thatched cottage consisted of a "but and a ben," both rooms being destitute of both plaster and ceiling. "Meggie's" only text books were the New Testament, the Book of Proverbs, and the Shorter Catechism. Every child made its appearance on Monday mornings with a penny and the traditional "peat." For punishment there was the stool of repentance, and if the offence were serious a red nightcap was added, while the favorite reward for good conduct or good scholarship was "bread and treacle," or a stick of barley rock. The only kind of fancy work taught was "wivin," and I can remember yet the chagrin I felt when my shortcomings in respect of the "shank" being compared with the proficiency of my elder sisters, I was held excusable as I had missed the invaluable training of "Meggie Branners." Such was the state of education thirty years ago within five miles of Aberdeen, and such the position of the female teacher. Now, within a few hundred yards of the place where "Meggie's" cottage still stands, there has arisen, at the magic touch of the School Board, a palatial mansion, with lavatories, cloak rooms, and a teacher's house of two storeys, where a bright-faced young lady drills her little flock in subjects which would make poor Meggie wonder if it were the same world as she used to live in. All honor to Meggie and such as she: from all I can hear I am inclined to think that these old dames, in their "soe racked caps" and tartan cloaks, were truer and nobler women, and had the best interests of their charges more deeply at heart, than many of us have at the present day. But their day is past. In many cases "the very spot, where many a time they triumphed, is forgot;" and we, their successors, have to stand in a far stronger glare of light, and have to support a far heavier weight of responsibility than they had. Such being the case, I trust I will not be considered presumptuous if I seek to draw attention to our responsibilities, and venture to hint at the sort of women it behoves us to be.

I shall look at our responsibilities in a threefold light—first, as to our pupil-teachers; second, as to our pupils; and third, as to ourselves.

One of the first responsibilities which occurs to me in connection with the first part of my subject is one from

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