

A Methodist School for Girls in Toronto

**Do We
Need It?**

**What Should
It Be?**

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The following addresses were given at the Annual Meeting
of The Victoria Women's Educational Association
in Annesley Hall, on March 23rd, 1904

Rev. W. H. Hincks, LL.B., dealt with the first question included
in the title. He spoke as follows :

An exquisite passage in Virgil's "Seventh Eclogue" is considered by many critics to be the most perfect piece of poetry ever written ; and the words of that passage were addressed to a girl about twelve years of age. If girlhood in the first century of our era, under heathen auspices, could inspire a great poet, how much more under Christian auspices, after twenty centuries, should girlhood be an inspiration to the race.

Queen Victoria had such a girlhood, and her womanly queenhood may be dated back to her unsullied and carefully trained girlhood. Until thirteen, she was not told of her relation to the throne, and during that period was rigidly kept from the taint of English court life, and the frivolities of society life. She was also wisely and constantly instructed in the Word of God by a discriminating teacher, specially appointed for that purpose.

No colors are so radiant as the colors of girlhood, no music so harmonious as that of girlhood, no flowers so fragrant as

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the flowers of girlhood, and no teaching impresses so deeply and clings so vitally as the teaching of girlhood. In a city like Toronto, with 240,000 people, how important it is what forces shape the ideals of our girls.

The educational forces of our city are the common schools, the Collegiate Institutes, and the different universities. The supplementary schools for girls are the Convent Schools, the Presbyterian College, Havergal, St. Margaret's, Westbourne, Bishop Strachan, Moulton, Miss Veale's, Glen Mawr, Branscombe Hall, St. Monica, and others. Some of these are doing excellent work. But how is it that the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Anglicans have equipped many of these schools for girls, and the Methodists have not one? Some say it is because Methodists are satisfied with the public schools for their daughters, and therefore feel no need of girls' schools. But that this is not true is seen by the fact that a very large number of Methodists send their daughters to these schools for girls. It is calculated that nearly one-third of the girls at these schools come from Methodist homes. The Roman Catholic Church would consider that she was committing denominational suicide if she left to other denominations the education of her girls. It may be said that in none of the schools we have mentioned is there ever any direct attempt to influence a girl to join the church to which the management of the school belongs. That may be true. But the early companionships, school friendships, social atmosphere, and early ideals gained at such a school cannot avoid giving more or less denominational bias. It would be a very weak school indeed if it did not unconsciously form some of the religious ideals of a girl in attendance for two or three years.

A girl's education is a very serious question because she so soon becomes a power in the world. A girl leaving school may in five years become the wife of a premier or governor, and help receive ambassadors, preside at State dinners, advise her husband in matters touching the weal of a whole nation. The church which has consciously or unconsciously influenced that girlhood vitally will control her womanhood.

A Methodist family in this country sent their daughters to a finishing school in England, in which the predominating element is Anglican. On the return of those girls to Canada they left the Methodist Church and joined the Anglican. Because the church which educates the girlhood gains the

womanhood and does it without the slightest attempt to proselytise.

A young man brought to me the lady he expected to marry. She was a Roman Catholic, but during three years had been attending a Methodist church, and she desired to be baptized and received into her future husband's church. After some time she was baptized, and afterward married. Everything went well till her first babe came, and then she called on a Roman Catholic priest to baptize her child. The church which had educated her girlhood had, after all, the best hold of her womanhood.

One afternoon I called at three homes. The first was that of a Presbyterian girl who had married a Methodist husband, and found that he had joined her church. The next home the wife was a Baptist and the husband a Methodist. In that home both wished to attend the Baptist church. The third home afforded a similar case. There are cases where the lady being Methodist influences her husband brought up in some sister church to also become a Methodist. But for some reason we lose more than we gain by marriage. I married a young man coming from three generations of Methodists to a strong-minded, cultured girl belonging to the Baptist Church. Within one year that young husband asked to be immersed, and joined his wife's church. In doing so he yielded to the greater force. There was more denominational conviction in her little finger than in his whole body. These cases prove that the denominations which get the girls, and get them early in life, stand the best chance to get their homes after, with their husbands and children.

Girls do not drift into strong Christian character, or strong loyalty to their church. They are trained into strength of character during their impressible years. Our Deborahs who have poured their lives into discouraged nations, our women of nerve and clear sagacity, our Queen Elizabeth, our Queen Victoria, Mrs. Stowe, Mrs. Wesley, George Eliot, and Miss Willard; all our great women were carefully trained in girlhood, and did not come by accident. So that if Methodism is to have intense loyalty in her daughters, she must not leave their education to rivals, and (in spite of recent union talk) earnestly competing denominations.

Polish girls are said to be so beautiful, soulful, and dominant, that Bismarck made a law prohibiting a German,

who had married a Polish girl, from buying an estate in Polish Prussia. Why? Because such a wife made her husband a Polish patriot in the twinkling of an eye.

The Methodist State of Ohio contains one-tenth of the Methodists of the entire world. In the rural sections of that State, Methodism outnumbers all the other Protestant denominations by several thousand. But when the Methodists of the rural sections of that State move into the cities we lose one-third. This third are principally young people. And we lose them, chiefly through social considerations, to the Presbyterian and the Protestant Episcopal Churches. Now, it is often social considerations and aesthetic motives that take our daughters from the State schools to supplementary schools for girls.

I have made inquiry among our people, whose daughters attend these schools, as to what are the motives. I have asked what is there in these schools, carried on by private and denominational agency, that our State schools are not supplying. I have received the following answers:

1. These girls' schools supply a student's atmosphere, day and night.

2. They supply a thorough course in music.

3. They have excellent instruction in painting and decorative art.

4. They receive thorough training in dancing. (The Metropolitan School of Dancing having many of these girls' schools in training.)

5. They have the advantage of training in ladylike deportment, and to effect this are under the personal care of a governess at table, walking, in matters of taste in dress, and in conversation.

6. They have practical training in household science. Household science has become a necessity in a girl's education. The sisters of King Edward of England can cook and sew, as well as paint a picture. The Empress of Germany sharply supervises the making of her own gowns, trims her own hats, and looks after her husband's linen.

7. These schools are patronized by some because it is asserted they give a "topping off" to a girl's education.

There is no doubt but that excellent and lasting work is being done in some of these girls' schools. Some of them are a credit to our city and province, and their pupils bear comparison with any in the province.

On the other hand, let us remember that "topping off" has its dangers. In some cases it shows itself in affectation of pronunciation—a Lord Dundreary broadening of the vowels, and silly imitation of faulty English: as, "Let me paws," "Beg pawdon." "Topping off" in some cases consists in breeding caste pride, social self-conceit, and an intolerant exclusiveness, which is a curse to any country, home, or church. "Topping off" in some cases lays the foundation for the love of French opera, late dances, bridge whist, insipidity in conversation, and soul shallowness. "Topping off" in some cases means a superficial education in external deportment. There is no greater social affliction than a woman who has nothing but deportment.

Now, there is no more serious question before the Victoria Women's Educational Society than the proper education of our girls. Shall we place the burden on others of educating that portion of our population who are to become wives and mothers, whose slightest word in the sitting-room, at table, by the cradle, at breakfast, at bedtime, in the sick-room, is more potent than any sermon, than any law?

The girl is the mother of the woman just as the acorn determines the oak. Is there vice in politics? The tap-root is in the home in false ideals. Is there vice in commerce? The tap-root is in the home in false ethics. Is there superstition in Ireland? It is because the mother early becomes the tool of the priest.

Was there heroism in Sparta? It was because mothers sang war-songs by the cradle. Was Wesley a power? It was because of his mother very largely.

The race has attained its best estate from its trained womanhood, and educated motherhood which grows out of trained girlhood. Must Methodism in a city like Toronto leave this training, which is being done outside of our common schools, to her sister churches, and thus shirk her share of the burden and reward?

The second question was taken up by H. H. Fudger, Esq. He spoke as follows:

In common with many who are interested in the education of our young women, I have wondered why we have in Toronto no ladies' school under Methodist auspices. The multiplication of ladies' schools in our city, and the increased attendance in those that have been long established, indicate a growing desire upon the part of parents to give their daughters, before school days are over, the benefit of such training and accomplishments as these schools furnish. That there is room for still another might be considered a fair inference. I have no thought of criticism of efforts to provide for the education of young women under other auspices, when I say I am not sure that I would care to see the Methodists of Toronto establish here a ladies' school, unless we believe we can do the work better in some important particulars than it is being done elsewhere. Simply to have a Methodist school would hardly be justification for duplicating. The room for improvement is a very large room. We should aim at the highest and best if we begin at all. It would be well for us to cut loose from the idea that young ladies "finish" their education at these schools. Unless they leave school with a sharpened appetite—a keener thirst for knowledge—I fear the school must be said to have failed in one of its chief functions.

In connection with a school located in Toronto, it seems to me that several subjects might be taught by means of the lectures at our university, relieving the school of the necessity of having expensive specialists in these subjects, and allowing the management larger scope for such studies as will fit the young woman to take her place in the home—to be the complement rather than the competitor of the man. I take it that young women who contemplate a professional career would not attend such a school, and that our aim would be to suitably equip those whose circle of influence would be the home circle. In larger institutions, both public and private, the teaching facilities may be good, and the student may be able to show a satisfactory report and pass a creditable examination, but there must necessarily be a lack of that most potent factor in education—the personal contact between student and teacher, with all its telling influence upon thought and character. I venture to hope that those who have in mind a project of this kind for the Methodists of Toronto and

of Canada will see to it that the students are brought into touch with noble teachers whose personal influence will stimulate a desire for knowledge, and will develop in the student sincerity of character, love of truth and honor in all simplicity and gentleness.

I would hope that very special attention be given to physical training. We sometimes speak of the heathen at home and the need of missionaries for them, and just as we have seen the importance of sending medical missionaries to foreign lands, I believe we shall come to consider it of vital importance that a medical missionary have a prominent place on the staff of our ladies' school, that the laws of health, of exercise, of diet, of temperature, and ventilation may be taught, line upon line, and precept upon precept. Success in life, for women as for men, perhaps more than for men, depends upon a firm foundation of physical health.

There are other things, such as music and art and domestic science, that go without saying, and it might be taken for granted that the study of the Bible would be a subject of chief concern. But I fear we have been taking that for granted too long. It is omitted in our public schools, and it must, I believe, be confessed that most of our Sunday-schools do the work very superficially. How, indeed, could it be otherwise—a brief half-hour in the week being all the time available? But if Canadian mothers of the future are no more familiar with the Holy Scriptures than are many Canadian young women of this decade, the most powerful of all influences for moulding the life and character of this young nation will have waned, and the right arm of her strength will have become palsied. I trust, then, your young women will acquire a thorough acquaintance with the English Bible. Not to make them theologians—far from it; indeed, I had almost said, God forbid!—but to make them wise unto the salvation of their children and the sanctification of their home.

Thus, as Ruskin puts it, "you have first to mould her physical frame, and then as the strength she gains will permit you, to fill and temper her mind with all knowledge and thoughts which tend to confirm its natural instinct of justice and refine its natural tact of love." For I believe it to be one of the most hopeful and attractive features of educational work for young women that you have, as a basis to work on, this natural instinct of justice, of fairness, of righteousness.

Many a man who is confronted with problems of commercial or political morality, with labor difficulties and the like, might get speedy and sure help to their solution by stating them at home, and noting the interrogations of his wife and daughters. Woman's natural instinct of justice may not furnish the answer he seeks or the answer he prefers, but it is very likely to be the answer he needs. How important, then, that this natural instinct of justice be not warped or dwarfed, but confirmed and strengthened, that she may be the complement and helpmeet and saviour of the man, the saviour indeed of this young country, where we must have high political, commercial, and social ideals.

The proper location or situation for the school? That question will no doubt be solved satisfactorily when the time comes. Let it be a large place—I mean large out of doors, rather than indoors. I believe I would put up with a very plain and inexpensive building at first if only there were ample grounds.

As to the financial problem. Well, it ought to be a business enterprise—it ought to pay its way. It is a worthy object, and might well appeal to some philanthropist, but unless the unexpected happens it will have to be taken hold of as an investment—self-supporting and dividend-earning; for the Methodist public are very like the general public—they object to being taxed for higher education.

Let us not forget that the most difficult part of such an enterprise is not its inauguration. There's enthusiasm in the beginning; there's the popularity of any new thing that may lead to underestimating the every-day difficulties of maintenance and administration, which remain with us when the novelty has worn off. Now that the project has taken form, we shall not be surprised to see it develop very rapidly. We have but to look about us here at what has been accomplished—at the equipment of this commodious and beautiful residence for women students, and we shall conclude there is no want or ignorance beyond the reach of the potent and benign influence of united effort, nor any height of educational ambition which you cannot raise still higher.