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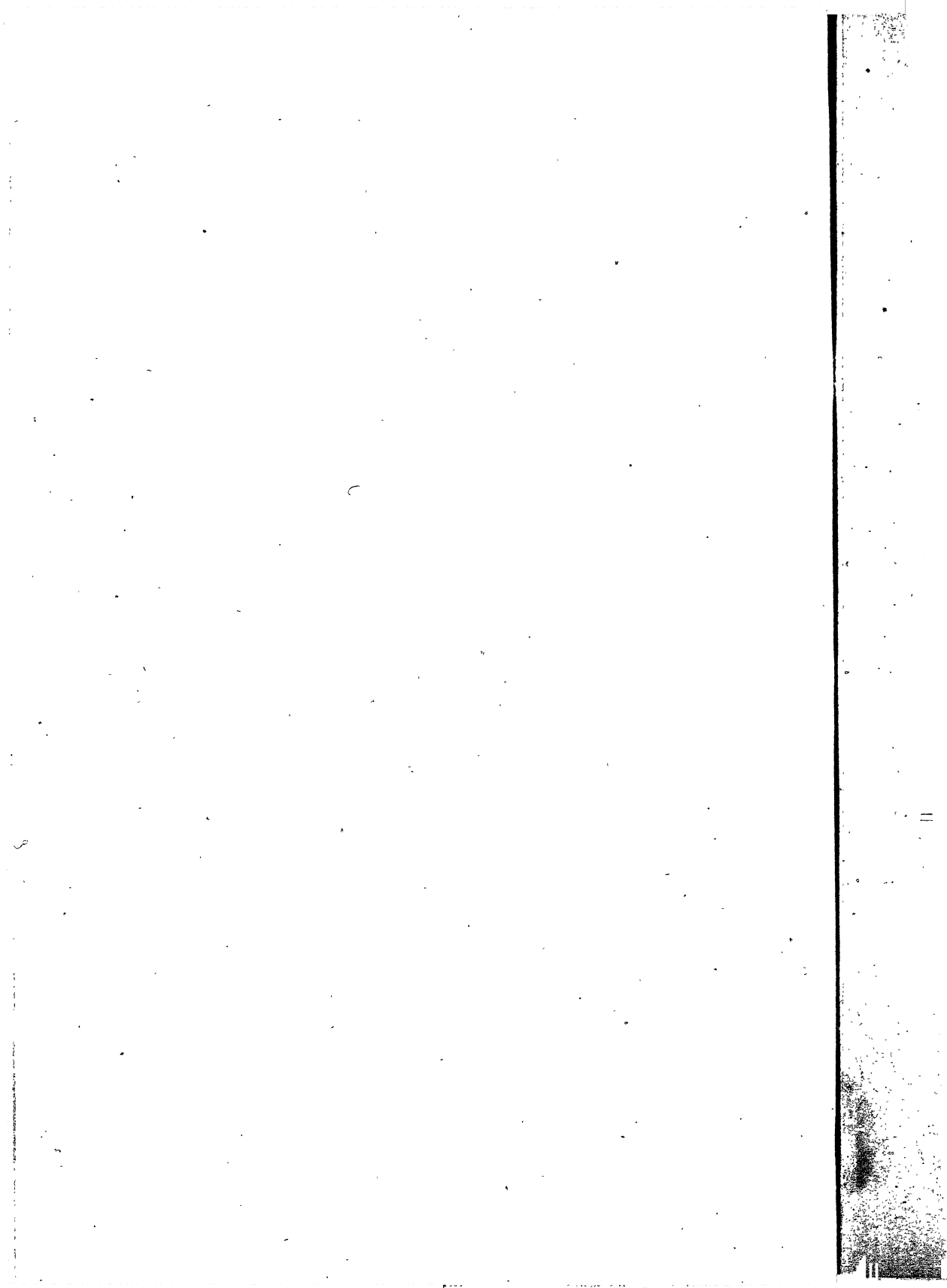
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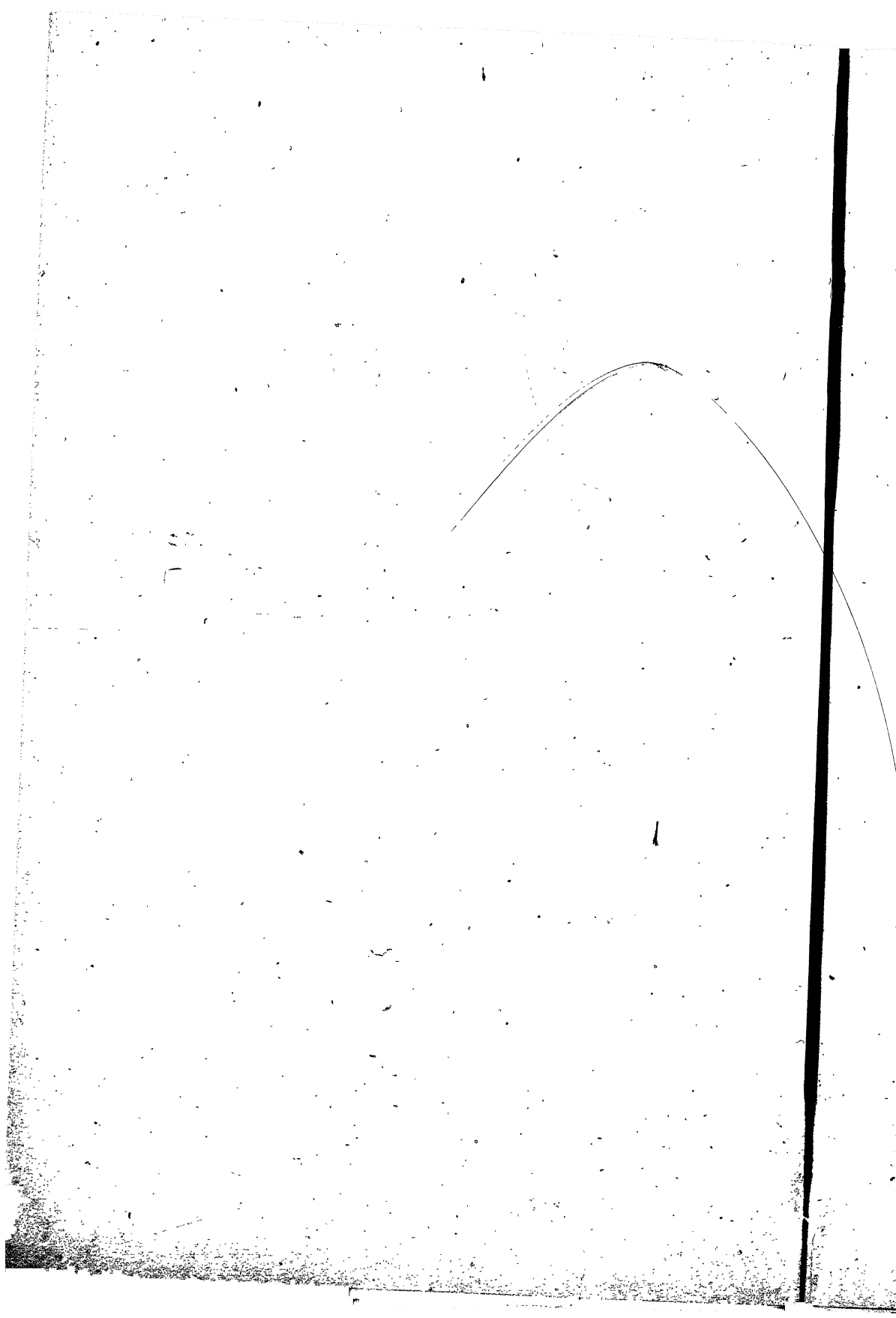
EDUCATED WOMEN.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

DELTA SIGMA SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY.

DECEMBER, 1889.



[FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.]

EDUCATED WOMEN.

THE SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE
THE DELTA SIGMA SOCIETY OF MCGILL
UNIVERSITY, DECEMBER, 1889.

BY PRINCIPAL SIR WILLIAM DAWSON, LL.D., &c.

MISS DERICK AND LADIES:—

I have very much pleasure in contributing my quota to the useful work of this Society, believing it to be an important agent in promoting good education; since what you do in this way for yourselves necessarily has more value as a means of culture than anything that others can do for you. In selecting a subject I have been guided by the consideration that to produce educated women in the true and best sense is the object of the course of study established here; and it is mainly in this relation that I shall discuss the questions which it raises, and with especial reference to the nature and uses of general academical education.

It is a trite remark, but one ever needing repetition, that education as an art is not the superadding of something to the man or woman, but the cultivation or development of the powers inherent in the student or learner. On this truth hang certain practical rules which are applicable to all kinds of education and alike to both sexes. One of these is that education should advance as the powers naturally develop themselves. It is absurd to attempt to teach anything at an age too early, and unwise to neglect to teach at each successive age the kinds of learning which that age is fitted to receive and assimilate. Another is that at every age education must be a gradual process—every kind of learning being received little by little like the daily food which nourishes the body, and which must be taken as appetite and powers of digestion will permit; or, to adopt a still plainer and very ancient figure, like pouring water into a very narrow-necked bottle,

which must be done drop by drop or in a very slender stream. Another is that the educator must consider the various capacities inherent in the pupil, and must develop these symmetrically, or in such a manner as to produce a perfect and harmonious form, not dwarfed in one direction and exaggerated in another. It is to be feared that the educator is in this respect sometimes no more successful than the hairdresser and dressmaker, who in their attempts to please so often produce strange and misshapen caricatures of poor humanity. Still another of these principles is that the general and symmetrical development of the whole man or woman should proceed some length before the bias is given to engrossing specialties. Not that the youngest minds and bodies have not their special powers and gifts; but these are often of a merely temporary character, and can be wrought in harmoniously with the general process of education. These principles being accepted, we have next to inquire as to the special directions in which we must educate, and this more particularly with reference to woman, and to woman in our present state of society.

First, then, we may place Physical Education—the training of the outward bodily frame for work and enjoyment in the world. Here it is to be feared there is a serious failure, more especially among those who are in the upper and middling ranks of the social scale. Want of air and exercise, late hours, unwholesome diet, cramping and unsuitable dress are the fertile seeds of a rank harvest of indigestion, lassitude, irritability, unfitness for useful exertion, and resort to unhealthy stimuli for relief. Let nothing here satisfy short of the full healthy development of the physical frame, fitting it first for the performance of the duties of the wife, the mother and the worker; and then for the indwelling of a strong active intellect and rightly-balanced will. Physical training is in some sense the lowest of all; but for that very reason it is a foundation, lacking which any superstructure of mental culture may be a mere castle in the air—a phantom baffling all our calculations with illusive hopes. The means of such training are easy, and within the reach of most. They grow in the first place naturally out of the wise direction and guidance of the spontaneous physical vigour of childhood, and may be carried on later by judiciously selected gymnastic exercises, along with suitable dress and abundant vital air, or by any kind of useful work calling for muscular exertion in moderate and regulated amount. If there are those who,

from inherited defects of constitution, or the hard requirements of unfavourable conditions of life, are more or less shut out from this great blessing, there is the more need to devote in their case especial pains to this matter, and the more reason why others should hold forth the hand of help from their superabundant resources. Here I would further say that the constitution and physiological habitudes of woman—her excitable nervous temperament, and special liability to be unduly stimulated by emulation, love of approbation, and shall I say ambition, to undue exertion—should be taken into account in every system of education for women. At the same time I would express the belief that a certain morbid irritability in these directions has been the result of the action of our modern civilization on the physique of woman, and that a healthier physical culture would remove some at least of the present inequality in these respects of the sexes.

Rising above the physical nature, with its roots interwoven in it, but producing results as different as the flowers and fruit are different from the soil from which they are nourished, is the Mental or Intellectual Nature. Its culture naturally presents itself in three aspects—the scientific, the literary, and the æsthetic—diverse in their aims, but not to be separated practically in their pursuit.

Scientific Culture, in its broad sense, is no doubt the widest of these—embracing as it does all that relates to the systematised knowledge of the outer world of matter and the inner world of mind. So vast and varied is this field, that it is hopeless for any one mind to grasp the whole of it in detail. Fortunately, however, it is possible to single out the parts of it that of right belong to general and those that belong to special education. Every educated person should know something of mathematical science—enough to have some good preception of the laws of form and number, and of their uses in practical life and in unravelling the mysteries of the universe; and to these mathematical elements should be added the study of some one of the departments of physical science proper, or of natural philosophy. Again, every education should embrace the elements of the knowledge of the atomic constitution of matter, its elementary substances, and the laws which regulate their combination and decomposition. This chemical key unlocks most of the great treasures of nature, and opens the way to the acquisition of untold wealth. Thirdly, every educated person should have some training in the laws of thought,

and in what is known of our own mental constitution. For man or for woman these three foundations of mathematics, chemistry and logic are those which alone can support any sound knowledge of nature, or adequate culture of the powers we must employ in order to gain the mastery of the world around us, and occupy our place therein as the image of God. The great practical difficulty is the right teaching and proportioning of these studies. The teaching of them may be begun in ordinary schools, if well managed, but for their higher and practical pursuit we must have specialists as teachers—men or women knowing these subjects thoroughly, enthusiastic in them, able to tell what they know, and with sufficient good sense and general culture to appreciate the relation of their several departments to other spheres of mental action and to the mind of the learner. Rare men or women these, in our imperfect world, and, as yet, half-civilized age. I would not here be supposed to bespeak for women precisely the same education in these pursuits accorded to our young men in our existing colleges, but something better. The claims of these elements of scientific cultivation have as yet scarcely been fully acknowledged in our colleges for men, either in matter or manner. They have not yet—unless we except mathematics—been given their true place as groundworks of knowledge, though in this University we have endeavoured at least to give to them an early place in our course of study. We may not for a long time be able to remedy these defects in our colleges for men. Perhaps they do not admit of any remedy in this generation. But the thorough scientific education of women should be conducted under improved methods, and with all the aids and appliances that our time can furnish. We already have some models in elementary science teaching in the best English and American colleges for women, like Newnham, Girton, Wellesley and Vassar. It is right to say, however, that both in the Universities of Montreal and Toronto we have to some extent broken through the trammels which have cramped some of the older universities, and, in so far as limited means will permit, have approached to the ideal of suitable science education for junior students.

I have spoken of three subjects that lie at the threshold of the temple of science, but beyond these the lady learner may go on to other scientific learning—into the sciences which relate to minerals, plants, animals, and the earth itself, into the grand fields of physics and astronomy, into the equally attractive domain of organic chemistry

and physiological science, or still more profoundly into the science of mind. These should be cultivated as time, talents, and opportunity permit, but the elements I have mentioned open the way and are essential to solid success. In the education of women hitherto, much has been lost in efforts to teach advanced subjects in a superficial manner without knowledge of their elements. Much evil has also resulted from the attempt to teach science by mere cramming of text-books, which is in reality not teaching science at all, and by the difficulty of obtaining competent teachers. In this matter almost everything depends on the presence of a teacher who is fully master of his subject, and thoroughly imbued with its spirit.

Taking Literary Culture in the same broad sense with scientific, it will include the whole field of human thought and action as embodied in language and literature. Here again we have a domain, not, it is true, boundless like that of nature, because it relates to the works of man, not to those of God, but still practically without limit in so far as individual power is concerned. At the entrance to it lie two elementary parts of education of the most eminently utilitarian character. The first is the cultivation of our powers of expression in speaking and writing, which can be accomplished only by the study of our own language and its literature. The second is the storing of our minds with the wisdom embodied in history, a study which in its practical utility may be held to surpass all others, inasmuch as in this garb it has pleased God to give us His own divine revelation, that sacred history which is and ever must be the kernel of all true wisdom, and inasmuch as the secular history of the world is our main store-house of accumulated human experience. To these two great primary utilities of literary culture may be added that training of taste and criticism which links this department to the next, and that acquaintance with the languages and literature of other peoples and times which should widen our comprehension of human thought in its various manifestations.

But how and in what measure can these inestimable benefits of literary culture be secured? Much can be done, and more will be done in the future, to give a stable ground-work of the use of our own language in the elementary schools. Added to this the higher education should embrace rhetoric and the more delicate graces of composition, and the critical study of some good author or authors, with investigation of the roots of our language in its original Saxon

and Celtic sources, and the additions which have been grafted into it from abroad. The learner should also be introduced to the riches of some other cultivated tongue, either ancient or modern, and this should be made the means of training in what is known of the laws of language in general, and in the understanding of the different modes of thought and expression of different peoples. I have said one other language, because it is difficult to do more in consistency with the claims of other learning, except in the case of those who are to make language a speciality. There is reason to believe that the obligation resting on us in our colleges for men, to attempt to teach several languages at once, is one of those bondages forced upon us by ancient custom, from which we must some day be emancipated, and to which the teachers of women should not commit themselves. If women are to be trained as philological specialists, I would further say that in adding a third or fourth language to their course of study, these should not, as usual in the case of young men, be of the same group with our own, as the Latin, Greek, French, German, and even Sanskrit are, but should be of some other of the great branches of speech—a Semitic like the Hebrew, or a Turanian one like the Chinese, or those old Assyrian and Chaldean tongues now so much studied. Otherwise the lingual culture of the lady specialist in language will have the same one-sided character which it has long had among male students, who may hold themselves to be scholars while ignorant of the oldest and most widely spread languages of the world. Going beyond language and general literature, I do not know what to say of history, except that in the higher education it should not be confined to those mere summaries or school text-books, which are supposed to be the special historic pabulum of students, but should be taught through standard works, and with reference to original authorities, and under the care of one who is himself an historian in knowledge, heart and feeling, and wide sympathy with all that is noble in humanity. To do this, a limited field both in time and space must be selected, except in the case of historical specialists.

On the Æsthetic part of education I have but a few words to say; but I would not have it thought that I value this little. On the contrary, it is certain that true beauty is the handmaid of true goodness, and warped and distorted notions of the beautiful are the fitting companions of what is low and vile in morals, and are the fruitful sources

of evil in social and religious matters. In our actual education the special culture of taste is very much limited to painting, sculpture and music. No kind of culture gives a purer taste, or is more likely to repel us from those hideous barbarisms that glare on us on every side in the guise of ornament, than careful and accurate copying of the beautiful forms of nature, or of those strange marvels of art which have come down to us from classical antiquity. No æsthetic culture is more elevating than that of music, if it be truly music—that music which is in harmony with the higher and better feelings of our nature; and if it be taught in connection with the scientific principles on which the art depends for its power to please, and which constitute one of the most remarkable of those God-given correlations between mind and matter which meet the student of man and nature at every point. I cannot help thinking that a true culture of art might be made an important means of correcting taste in dress, furniture, and social customs, and in rendering some forms of evil and savagery less attractive. But here, again, we want the heaven-inspired teacher to give a right direction. It is but right to say, in leaving this subject, that the love of beauty should be cultivated in all our teaching of science and literature, as well as in that of the fine arts themselves.

There remains but to say one word on Moral-Culture, and that word must be, that pure and high morality is not to be taught by rote in schools. It grows of pure example and of the divine influence in the heart. Therefore I believe that the best moral and religious influence in our homes, our schools, and our colleges is that of the example of a true piety and self-sacrificing devotion in the parent and teacher; and that woman, whose highest mission is to be the guide and ornament of a family, should in this way learn to fulfil that mission. There is, however, a science of ethics, having its roots in the constitution of human nature and branching into all departments of social and political life, which has in it much that is congenial to women of culture; and much that connects itself with the higher spiritual life. Even if educated women should not be called on to take part in public or political affairs, they may find such culture of great value in the higher walks of social and educational influence, in which they must occupy a place of increasing importance as our age advances.

Here there intervenes a dark shadow in the picture I am tracing—the immorality and even irreligion mixed up with so much that is called education. I do not refer here altogether to the hard and barbarous

punishments and equally inhuman stimuli which are happily giving place in schools and colleges to better influences. There is besides these a growing effort to warp education into the service of a reaction against the light and liberty of the time, to make it narrowly sectarian or ecclesiastical, to mix it with superstitions and prejudices hateful to God and man, and to shut out the light reflected from God's own word and works as a dangerous thing. Alas! for the nation whose women are trained to be the devotees of superstition. On the other hand there is a growing danger that education may fall under the influence of a dark and cold materialism, teaching that good and evil are but shades of feeling, that beauty is no gift of God, that man himself is the child of dead forces and the heir of no immortality. The world has not yet seen a nation whose women were infidels, but such a nation would be a hell on earth. In our time these opposing evil forces are struggling for the mastery and tearing each other in their rage, and it is even difficult to secure the services of specialists who are not affected with one or other of these opposite errors. This is at present the saddest feature in our educational outlook, and I do not know how it is to be amended unless educated women will take some part of the work into their own hands, and bring to bear the influence of their own practical good sense and right feeling on the side of truth, honesty and good taste.

It remains for us to ask how are our women best to attain some share of that great and glorious heritage of light and learning on the borders of which we have been touching? The first preliminary is the erection of good elementary and high schools for girls, as preparatory to higher education. In this respect our larger seats of population in Canada are not badly provided; but it is the true policy of all the friends of higher education to be zealous in promoting the prosperity and improvement of these schools. The next requisite is that girls and their parents should be prepared to give some years of their time after leaving school to the work of higher culture; and undoubtedly some portion of the enjoyments and social gaieties of life must be sacrificed for this purpose. If this cannot be done to the extent of taking the full course for a degree, then a well-selected partial course is the best substitute, and may be followed without engrossing the whole time of the student. Our universities would much rather have undergraduates than partials; but at present we must provide for the fact that many ladies desirous of higher culture

are prevented by circumstances from pursuing the complete course of study. We are the more under obligation to make such provision, as having succeeded to the excellent work of the Ladies' Educational Association, which was so efficient in this department, and which prepared the way for a regular academical course.

It would be invidious to make any comparison of the modes which different universities in this country have adopted to provide for the higher education of women, under circumstances often of extreme difficulty; but I may be permitted to say that the method introduced here, by the liberality of Sir Donald Smith, while still imperfect, enables us at present to secure equal instruction for the sexes in separate classes with identical examinations and degrees, and bids fair in its full development to place the Canadian ladies of the coming time in a position to be envied by their sisters abroad, while its influence on our school systems and on our colleges for men cannot fail to be in the highest degree beneficial. The time may come when instead of the question, "How shall our young women obtain the same advantages with our young men?" it may be "How can our courses of study for men be so reformed as to make them equal to those of our colleges for women?"

Nothing in the preceding part of this address refers to what may properly be termed professional education, but only to that general culture which should be accessible to every educated woman, and this with the view that her profession is to be that which we referred to in the outset and which is the highest in the world—that of a wife and mother—the high priestess of the family, earth's holiest shrine—the ruler of the well-regulated household, which is the sole possible basis of any sound public morality and true prosperity—the wise and thoughtful regulator of all those social re-unions, charities and benevolences which make life agreeable. If women must be prepared for permanent professions it is because the world is out of joint—because it has sunk into a lower fall than that which deprived our first parents of paradise, and has thrown down women not only from the position of equal helpmeet in innocent Eden, but from the subject helpmeetness established after the fall, and has driven her out, not with the man but alone, to contend with the thorns and thistles of the wilderness. Alas! that our boasted civilization has fallen so low that it should be necessary even to contemplate the isolation of woman in the battle of life. Happily, Christianity is not

to blame for this ; for under its system women, while allowed to engage in all useful avocations, were ordinarily to be sustained in the privileges of domestic life by their male relations, or failing these, by the church itself : and those who had been deprived by death of their natural protectors were to be employed in missionary work. These were the "widows indeed" of the Apostle Paul. The work of this christian ministry, whether educational, benevolent, or religious, was evidently the sole public profession recognized for women in the New Testament. But the world is not yet sufficiently christian or sufficiently civilized to appreciate fully the social beauty of Christianity. Hence it is full of wrangling as to the rights and privileges of women who must earn their daily bread, and especially of those who must earn it by the labour of the brain rather than of the hands.

I may sum up the position of women in a truly christian society by an example which, though old, bears on present questions. When Paul the apostle crossed over from Troas, there may not have been a solitary christian in all Europe. In Philippi he went on the sabbath day to the meeting-place of his Jewish countrymen. He found there a few pious women holding a prayer meeting. There must have been Jewish men in Philippi, but all were too careless or too busy to attend to the obligations of the Sabbath. A few women represented all the true religion of the place. The hearts of some of these women were touched by the message of Paul, and in the house of Lydia—a dealer in purple, and a christian lady—met the first Christian Church in Europe. This instance illustrates the position of women in the Jewish and early christian church. The heathen women of the period were degraded to the lowest point by the licentious character of their idolatry and by its failure to recognize anything true or good in the nature of woman. The Jewish women everywhere occupied a higher plane, based upon the spiritual and moral teaching of the Old Testament, and as was natural, their religion was less that of the law and more that of the prophets and psalmists than that of the men. Hence in every Gentile city the Jewish women were a pure and holy element to which we find that many of the better natures among the Gentile women, "the honourable women," of the Acts of the Apostles, joined themselves. It was from these that the women of early christianity were recruited, those efficient helpers of the Apostles to whom Paul so often refers.

Christianity was especially the gospel of women, but its progress was arrested by the ambition of men and the growth of ecclesiasticism, the inroads of barbarians and the wars and desolations succeeding the downfall of the Roman Empire, while the chivalry of the middle ages did little except for a privileged class. The world has yet to see the full blessings of the ministry of educated christian women, which may perhaps not be realised before that Saviour who, as he was called a friend of publicans and sinners, has also been sneered at as too womanly in his teaching, shall return in power to reign.

In the midst of present controversies one can at least see two professions, both intimately connected with the family, and both very near to the mission of the primitive widows and ministers of the Apostolic Church. The first of these is teaching, a profession most suited in every way to woman; and the arrangements whereby young women trained in our Normal Schools have in the United States and Canada almost engrossed to themselves the work of instruction, especially in the elementary schools, constitute one of the best and highest features of our educational system. Our Normal Schools are now to a great extent professional colleges for women, and they should be developed still further in this direction, more especially since the profession to which they lead is one which does not in any way interfere with the true functions and duties of woman. Another profession almost equally important is that of the trained and scientific nurse, that higher kind of medical nurse who is so much required to supplement the comparatively scanty attentions of the physician, and to govern and instruct or to replace altogether less competent attendants on the sick. That the medical profession itself, more especially in so far as female patients are concerned, should be open to women, I do not doubt is a possible feature of that higher civilization to which the world may one day reach; but in the meantime there can be no question as to the claims and position of the educated nurse. Beyond this I would go one step further. Great mental endowments and special genius, those grand and direct gifts of God, are not limited by sex; they belong to the world, and must not be repressed by neglect or prejudice. Those women who in the course of their education, show pre-eminent gifts in literature, in art, in science, or in philosophy, should be trained for their special fields, and the highest places in public and educational institutions should be open to them equally with men, otherwise mankind must continue

lately to halt along in the march of progress, deprived of half of the most precious endowments showered by heaven upon the earth. In conclusion, the sum of the whole matter is that the highest possible culture for women is necessary if we would be more than half civilized. If the education of men were carried to the highest perfection, and that of women neglected, we should have only a half culture, and this deteriorated by the absence of the reaction and stimulus which would spring from educated women; and by the vanity and frivolity flowing from the influence of those whose minds have been left uncultivated.

Thus whatever functions in society the educated woman may be called on to fill, she must be an important factor in the higher civilization and in the progress of humanity, and her precise relation to the various avocations of life will develop itself as higher education becomes more and more general. Permit me to close with two historical pictures of educated and talented Englishwomen, Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria. The former, placed at the helm in a great and terrible crisis of the history of our country, had loneliness forced upon her by the necessities of her position. She must employ and govern all sorts of men but could mate with none. This was her God-given mission, which she performed heroically at whatever sacrifice of her own feelings and affections. The latter, a loving wife and mother, guiding with gentle hand at once her own family affairs and those of the state, suffering the sorrows and trials incident to domestic life; yet a firm, wise and benevolent ruler, but not like the other doomed to dwell apart and alone. Both women present an example of greatness and goodness in the highest sphere of public activity, yet how different in their history and surroundings. Every educated and intellectual woman must be a queen in her own sphere, whether small or great. She may be an Elizabeth or a Victoria. She cannot be both. The question of which may not depend altogether on herself; but with God's grace she may play well either part.

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