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VALEDICTORY.



Addressed by Mrs. Simpson

TO HER PUPILS,

After the Distribution of Prizes,

ON THE 30TH OF JUNE, 1863.

Printed for private circulation by a few of Mrs. Simpson's Friends.

Montreal :

PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

1863.

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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,—Once more it is my pleasant task to congratulate you upon the successful termination of the Midsummer Examinations.

I know that some of you have been working very hard, and will gladly rest awhile; indeed, the greater number of you have been diligent during the last three months, trying, not altogether in vain, to make up for a want of industry in the early part of the session.

I could wish that your labour had been more equally distributed over the year. I have no great faith in the lasting value of high-pressure study; it may occasionally produce brilliant results, and gain a prize for Recitation or some other subject, which can be mastered in a few weeks, but it will fail in the more important matters which require patient, calm, prolonged thought, which instruct the mind and form the character. During the winter months I noticed with much regret that many of you devoted to exciting pleasures and equally exciting conversation, far too large a portion of your time. Your minds, filled to repletion with the sickly sweetmeats of town gossip, had not the elasticity to enjoy the plainer fare provided for you here. I would urge upon your parents, respectfully but decidedly, the necessity of directing you in these things; but if, as it too frequently happens, you can do as you please in the distribution of your time, let me earnestly

advise you to give to school the years which properly belong to it. that you may be fitted for society, [when its turn shall come. Parents and medical men frequently remind me that health is of the first importance, and I agree with them; but I believe exciting gossip and late hours could count their enervated victims by hundreds, while few, *very few*, are injured by *over* study. But, enough—I must not forget to tell you that I have remarked with thankfulness that to this sad rule there have been bright exceptions. There are girls here who came to school last September determined to do their duty as unto God and not unto man, and by the mercy of God, they have succeeded so far. To them I say: “Go on and prosper, and bring to perfection that good work which is begun in you; not only will you do much for yourselves, but you will by example do that which must affect generations yet unborn, for no man liveth to himself.”

We are now closing the fifth session of the School, and I may, perhaps, be permitted to bring under the notice of friends here present, an addition which has been made during this period. I allude to the opening of Elementary Classes for the instruction of quite young children. Three considerations induced me to take this step,—1st., I can now give them a class-room for their special use, without interfering with the older pupils; 2nd., The parents sometimes wish to send their little girls where they may have the escort and protection of their elder sisters; and lastly, I begin to desire to train the little ones according to my own views of education.

It not unfrequently happens, that in receiving young ladies for my upper classes, I find myself in the position of a builder required to place the roof on a house before the foundation has been laid. I make an effort in such cases to do both at once; the time is limited; the pupil, conscious of her own ignorance, is growing anxious; the parent, scarce knowing how such a state of

affairs came to pass, is sanguine about this last year at a finishing school, and therefore, both the pupil and I try the impossible. But if I love my profession, if I recognize its lofty ends, I must have many a misgiving, many an anxious thought on this subject. I am not afraid to declare openly, how it is that the case in point is such a common one;—elementary education is seldom understood, and still less frequently well done. I blame no one,—it better becomes me to point out what I consider to be a right education for infant children.

No doubt, the infant intellect should not be unduly taxed any more than the infant hand or foot; but as the one would become awkward, if not useless, were it not judiciously exercised, so the other will be cramped and feeble, if the work of education be too long delayed. It will be my purpose in my Elementary Class to give my pupils habits of order, punctuality and obedience, to help them to exercise their powers of observation in everyday matters of reading, writing and spelling; and that this may be done in a manner agreeable to the youngest child, every experienced teacher knows. I cannot here explain the precise system of instruction pursued in my School, because that would be to attempt what can scarcely be accomplished except by actual demonstration. But I am sure that every mother must have noticed how gladly a little child will learn, when the lesson is given in kind tones, and with a pleasant face. It naturally shrinks from knowledge if it gathers from the teacher's manner, that this unknown something into which it is being driven or scolded, is as distasteful to her as to itself.

Perhaps I may seem to promise too much, if I undertake for my assistants that they shall always wear smiling faces; for it is well known that patience and amiability do not, of necessity, form part of the teacher's character, and that this class of persons is not likely to be more perfect than others. Yet I would be understood to say, that no lady of imperfect temper should teach my infant

children, after I had fully ascertained the fact, because, whatever might be the allowance I personally could make for her, the contact must be injurious to my little ones. I do not know that I should deem it necessary to be equally considerate towards my pupils who are young women. I would not willingly subject them to moroseness or peevishness; but there is a time when it is as useful to the taught as to the teacher to learn to bear and forbear. A very intellectual learned teacher, who is also a model of patience, is not a person to be met with every day; and it must be remembered that many an amiable young woman's temper is spoiled by the rudeness and injustice with which she is treated by her pupils, who, if they see her fatigued or out of spirits, will take that opportunity of vexing her.

It is not my plan to keep a teacher always employed in the same class. Here she usually confines herself to certain subjects, which she teaches through the school. By this means she becomes familiar with the matter in hand from the rudiments to the conclusion, and avoids the trying monotony of dealing always with the same minds, while the children are refreshed by a change of voice and manner.

I may here, not inappropriately perhaps, return my best thanks to those who have assisted me during the past year. The pupils with me will be ready to acknowledge that the duty has been honestly and well done; for most girls know when they have been well taught, even though from idleness or inability, they may not have well-learned. Experience has shewn me how difficult is the profession of instruction; how short a way we are on the road when we have mastered the subjects which we have to teach; how constant and painful are the struggles for a self-control which it is the work of years to acquire. Yet it should be our endeavour to make the pupils feel that they have a friend, not a task-master, placed over them,—one who can sympathize with their trials and

privations, who, while enforcing the discipline so necessary to the attainment of the object for which all meet under one roof, will do so in a spirit which commands affectionate respect. No doubt the popular picture of the melancholy lonely governess is, sometimes, a truth, but we have little to do with such facts in Canadian schools. Our social position, without seeking to take a single step beyond that which legitimately belongs to it, is one which procures for us the society of the best educated and most enlightened persons of the city; and if our talents have real merit, they will not be unappreciated.

And now, it remains to me to bid adieu to my young friends, for a season, that we may seek repose and change, to fit us for another year's work. It may, or may not be the last occasion, when, in the providence of God, I shall be called upon to fulfil this, my yearly office; but there is a solemnity that attaches to actions performed for the last time, which I feel at this moment. To many among you I shall not speak again, in the capacity of teacher, and therefore my thoughts dwell on you now with an affectionate earnestness, which cannot but result from our long and pleasant intercourse. How mingled are the feelings! What pleasure and what sorrow meet in this parting! I thank God, that in some of you I can take an honest pride, as in those who have done their best here, to prepare for a more extensive scene of action elsewhere. I have noted with gratitude the growth of high principle, and the expansion of thought among you; and I am confident, that having done your utmost to improve the opportunities peculiar to your youth, you will not neglect the duties of riper years. I do not say this only to the clever and successful girl, who will go home to-day, with tangible proofs of her industry in her hand, but to her also who is conscious of having worked patiently and well, although she may have gained none of the honours of our little community. And now, your school career is

ended, and you are looking to an unknown future, with the indefinite, sanguine feelings which belong to your age and circumstances. At this moment, I know you would welcome important and exciting action; you feel yourselves harnessed for the battle of life, and are sure that whatever others may have done, you will make duty not pleasure, your aim. But it may be, that the calm tenor of the life at home will offer so few opportunities for the exercise of your powers, that the novelty of your liberty worn off, you will fancy your talents thrown away, and sigh for something more congenial to your youthful vivacity; and that your desire may be gratified will fling yourselves into gaiety and dissipation, bestowing upon the frivolities which invite you on every hand, that energy which is the more valuable, that it becomes less with every year of your life. O my children, if my last words are dear to you, if you value my parting advice, let me urge you to lay this to heart;—let no consideration of pleasure or change induce you to leave off for a moment, the work of self-education. Seek to listen to improving conversation, or read well-written books, that you may exercise and strengthen your judgment. Your own mistresses now, beware of becoming indolent, untidy and selfish. Exercise the talents you may have for the gratification of your friends. The young lady who does not like to sing or play when asked, is not simply nervous; she who cannot write the note of invitation, nor answer the friendly letter to save, may be, a mother's more valuable time, is not only diffident; these persons are selfish and idle; nervous they may be, inexperienced they may be, but they will not strive, for the sake of those who love them best, to overcome the weakness of self. Do not tell us, either, that you have nothing to do; what, do we send you from this place such finished musicians, such incomparable artists, such accomplished linguists, that you have nothing to do, even should there be no households awaiting your anxio

care, and no young sisters depending on you for instruction? Do not deceive yourselves; you have begun here a work, which will be ended only when you die; and should you cease your labours now, you will be that most melancholy thing—a ruin which has never known completion.

I have spoken thus anxiously, thus strongly, because, every day I am reminded of the trials which beset you; more perhaps, in this country than at home. Our young girls have the liberty and power of women, before they can have a woman's experience and judgment. Your position is full of difficulty, for should no one exercise control over you, you will be left to drift on the waters of life, a prey to every fascinating temptation which comes by; what wonder, if many a weak one among you should be dazzled by the fine dress, and foolish flattering society; which she can make her own, if she should so choose. Do you not feel that I cannot have seen your faces daily, watched your growth of mind and body, and take no interest in your future? If you have not been to me as my own children, you have been my trusting affectionate pupils; and that means that you have thought with my thoughts, and acted in obedience to my will. This has knit up a bond between us, known only to those, who have experience of our relative positions.

And now my most earnest prayers go forth with you, that you may receive the help and guidance of God's Holy Spirit, which if you follow, your nearest friend may dismiss all anxiety on your account, knowing that they who live to the glory of God, have all that in this world they can desire.