

A GIRL'S INFLUENCE.



LONG ago, in the days of the fairies, it is told that girls were sometimes known to have the gift of healing by touch, and you may guess they were then much run after, and of great use among their friends.

These days are gone, and that gift is now never heard of, but you, girls, have a power remaining quite as wonderful and every bit as serviceable. And what is that? Spiritual influence, young folks. Indeed, I am not sure but that the spiritual influence you may exercise, if you choose, is worth any number of the gifts of that age of sleeping beauties and enchanted castles.

Most of you—there are just a few sleepy heads excepted—are eager for power of some sort. You see that life is too serious an affair to be frittered away in doing nothing, and you don't want to be spoken about in the long run as having lived altogether in vain. Sensible girls! There is nothing like leaving one's mark, though it be but a little mark, on the world. Try, then, to have influence, for by it we may multiply ourselves to almost any extent, and have a hand in many another person's schemes and—not in a bad sense—a finger in many another person's pies.

"It is a fine subject," says Mary, "but of no practical account to me, for influence I have none." Don't you remember, Mary, how the wren said, as he dipped his beak into the lake, "Thou art lessened by this mouthful"? The wren, no doubt, expressed himself boastfully, but he spoke sound philosophy, for even the least has some power. You have relations and friends and acquaintances, so you have plenty of influence, and you could hardly be without it even if you went to play the hermit in a wood and live on crusts and watercresses.

The first field for the exercise of influence is certainly home. Never go out of your way, but start with what lies nearest. There are most difficulties there, for it is much easier, as everyone knows, to appear a model worthy of imitation to people we meet, say, once a week, than to those who see us every hour of the day. But at home you should begin. Be good daughters and loving sisters, and the greater blessing will follow that influence for which you have leisure out of doors. How much a girl can do to make her father's house brighter and happier, and how sweet a transition it will be when she comes to supply sunshine to a house of her own! "You have ever been an angel to me," a poet said, when on his death-bed, to his wife. May many a one, girls, have as good reason some day for using the same words about you!

Be eager for opportunities both at home and abroad, but not too eager either, for we may become greedy of power just as we may of money. Keep within bounds in this as in everything, and indeed the sober joys of influence are enough to satisfy anyone.

The best influence lies in example. In real gentleness and a consistent life there is something very persuasive; never forget that. Be, then, as near perfection as you can.

But what am I saying? Whatever you may think about yourselves, my friends, perfect women, as perhaps I have told you before,

do not run thirteen to the dozen. Indeed, someone says there are only two good women in the whole world, and of these one is dead and the other cannot be found. I only mention this calculation, however, as a curiosity, my own opinion being that it would be absurd to make a lower estimate than half a dozen good women at least to every good man.

If the best influence lies in example, the worst very often lies in advice. You think, Julia, this is a bit at you. Well, if the cap fits you, little one, wear it. Nobody likes being preached to, or to have even the best counsel administered for all the world as if it were a black draught. Do it gently if at all, just like my Nanette, who wrote the other day a letter of advice to her brother, and "I know you will not take it amiss," she added, "from your poor sister who loves you." Who could take it amiss when it was put in that way?

When you have influence, don't boast about it or encourage other people either to boast about it for you. A friend once told me he had overheard a girl's mother telling how her daughter could twist him round her little finger. "From that moment," said he, "the feat was impossible." His self-love got up in arms at the suggestion that he was not quite a free agent. So if any of you girls think yourselves born to rule the universe, or any single individuals in it, you had better keep the notion to yourselves.

Influence is not to be measured by the stir it makes in starting. Kisses, it is said, are not accompanied by so loud a report as cannon-balls, but they echo a great deal longer through the universe. Example, too, is a silent sort of speech, but it is far more powerful than if you kept your tongue wagging all day like a lambkin's tail.

Words, however, are not to be despised; the great thing is to take care to have them few and choose them well. Such was the case with one I remember, whose name the world never heard, and whose address, if she is still living, I do not know. All I am quite certain about is that by gentle words, united to a most perfect character, she acquired so great an influence over all her friends, that one of them said to me no later than yesterday, "As to my thoughts, I am not sure to whom they belong: I know not whether they are hers or mine." JAMES MASON.

EXAMINATIONS, AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR THEM.



HERE can scarcely be a reader of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER who does not know something about examinations, either by reading, by conversation, or from practical experience; and it is not in the least to be supposed that all our readers hold the same

views with regard to them. Some like examinations; some dislike them; some think they do good, while others think that they do harm. Let us try to discover some of the causes for these widely different views, and calmly consider the question of examinations generally.

The word examination *literally* means to

test by a balance, to weigh exactly; *educationally*, that is, in the sense in which we wish to examine it, it means to inquire into, to try by question. An examination may test our general knowledge without any special preparation for it, or it may follow a particular course of study, and it may be either *written* or *oral*.

Everyone knows that there are some things about which one has "a sort of idea," a hazy kind of feeling that one knows "all about it," but that if one were called upon to make a speech, or to give a written account of the subject in question, one would make rather a sorry figure. This being admitted, it becomes clear that we do not always know as much as we think we know. The difference between what some people know, and what they think they know is often very considerable! One strong argument in favour of examinations is that it is good for us to know exactly what we know, or at least to be tested by another standard than our own, in order to prevent our falling into false positions, or attempting to undertake work for which we are totally incompetent.

Imagine some one who thinks he knows "all about" medicine and setting up for a doctor, or someone who thinks he knows all about ships and the sea and applying for the office of captain! What would be the inevitable result if each of these men was able to command the position sought without any form of inquiry being made or proof to be shown that he was "duly qualified"? That people have acted in this way, if not exactly in these special cases, is a fact, and a fact which has been productive of very injurious results. Notably has this been the case with teachers, it not having been unusual to suppose that *anyone* can teach!

Happily this way of thinking is now beginning to be old-fashioned, and examinations are doing their utmost to place education on a higher level. Schools are inspected, pupils are examined, teachers obtain certificates, and many positions both for girls and boys, men and women, can only be obtained by public examination. It is less a question now whether the place suits the person, than whether the person suits the place.

Examinations are certainly an established fact, and it is probable that the earnest desire, on the part of those who are real workers and thoroughly honest, is the main cause of their enormous extension. That they may be carried to excess is possible. That intensely competitive examinations are healthy is doubtful. That *all* examinations are prejudicial to health is an utterly false assertion. The causes of the disrepute into which examinations sometimes fall are worthy of investigation, and they must be sought for in the many and various motives of the different grades of persons connected with them. It is scarcely necessary to say that none of these persons are entirely disinterested; they include children, parents, teachers, and examiners. I think I may safely say that some faults belong to each of these classes, and though I do not propose to discuss each *seriatim*, yet the general bearing of this remark will be borne out by what follows.

Examinations have a right use and a wrong one; they have their advantages, but they also have their disadvantages; and consequently we find that there are bad results as well as good ones to be traced to them. A few words as to their right uses.

1. As tests of exact and real knowledge they are invaluable; they place one in an honest position with *regard to one's fellows*. They help us to distinguish what we know from what we *fancy* we know. They point out to us those subjects of study which require our special attention; they show us our weak points, besides giving us the satisfaction of knowing that we have accomplished some-

thing. In other words they encourage us to work and correct our errors in working, and help us to become "realities" and not "shams."

2. As encouragements their value is scarcely of less importance, and to those who are brave enough to work for the love of the work itself the satisfaction which comes from having done well in an examination is beyond description.

3. As guides, especially to private students, who have few opportunities of judging from any other standpoints than their own, they point out the position they take in the world at large when measured by a general standard of opinion.

Many points might be given here, but we will pass on to another view of the case, what has been called the *wrong* uses of examinations:—

1. The narrowing of the depth and breadth of intelligent culture and the degeneracy into a system of *cram* and *superficial* knowledge in order to secure a "pass" must always be looked upon by true educationists as a wrong use of examinations. A necessary evil some people call it, surely without having sufficiently weighed the matter. Where does the fault lie? In the pupil? In the teacher? In the examination questions? Where?

2. The pushing on of quick pupils to obtain distinctions, to the disadvantage of the moderate and slow workers in a class, is another wrong use to which some persons put examinations.

3. The undue pressure put upon some to secure success, whether self-inflicted or otherwise, cannot be a good or right use of examinations, and yet how often one hears of this pressure. Injudicious parents in some cases urging their children forward; enthusiastic and eager teachers overtasking young brains; or ambitious and over-wrought students pursuing a reckless and ill-regulated course of study to pass an examination, which in its very preparation has eaten out the life and health!

The inquiry into this phase of the subject might be pursued much further, but we will proceed to find out some of the effects of examinations, both good and bad, and leave our readers to decide what they consider to be advantages or disadvantages. In their reflections here, too, we would ask them to consider whether the system of examinations is always at fault, or whether the evils which arise may not spring in many cases rather from its *abuse* than its legitimate use.

1. Examinations help us to establish an approximate standard of the acquirements and culture of people in the *mass*. This enables us to classify and arrange persons and things. It helps us to put "the right person in the right place."

2. Examinations often require great detail and minuteness of work, hence they encourage patient research and steady perseverance. In many cases they create a desire for the *best*, for excellence in everything one undertakes, for reading up much more than is required to "pass" the special subjects of study, for wider and better reading than one has been accustomed to indulge in, for real thought and serious inquiry for legitimate grounds upon which to form a judgment on a given subject; in fact, they tend to produce the most admirable order of mind.

3. But *examinations are often* productive of undue emulation, jealousy, and prejudice. They sometimes, especially when success (as often happens) follows "cramming," produce a conceited, ill-regulated, and contemptuous order of mind: we know these people tolerably well, and give them a class to themselves in the world. We call them "prigs."

4. Some examinations have such definitely marked features that, after a little careful ana-

lysis of previously given questions, their requirements may be reduced to the state of a series of probabilities. This often leads "adventurers" both among teachers and pupils, to "cram" up to the particular points and produce an artificial and much-to-be-deprecated educational polish. One might compare this to veneered furniture, plated metal, &c., which are often well got up, expensive, showy, but valueless.

5. Examinations are accused of producing nervous diseases and mental disorders. We cannot deny that they sometimes do this. But why? Are there no circumstances to blame outside the examination?

What little child is there who is incapable of answering a question? Who is thrown into a state of nervous excitement because a question has been asked? There *may* be some children of this kind, but are they healthy? What boys or girls are there who will not have to answer many questions during life; accept many positions not always quite in keeping with their wishes; fulfil many duties which are not real pleasures? What man or woman is there who will not be called upon to pass many judgments; to take decisive steps in many duties of life; to undertake many duties which will not be perfectly agreeable?

My reader who has so far followed will agree with me that some sort of preparation should be given to the little one for the duties of youth, and to the youth for the duties of maturity. Perhaps no better preparation could be given in many cases than by a steady system of examinations. One point only I insist on, *the examination shall be suited to the age, acquirements, and temperament of the examined*. By degrees the nervousness, indecision, hesitation, fear, &c., will all disappear, and a clear, cool, decided, well-regulated mind must be the natural outcome of such a course of training. When people plunge headlong into impossible studies and work at impossible speed to make up for defective training or idleness, or to satisfy an unworthy ambition, or from some other cause, then these evils will result; but I *deny* that the examination itself is the sole cause of the evil.

6. One evil I should like to point out specially to the readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER. It is the increased production of unsatisfactory books—"cram-books." They are, as a rule, replete with errors, but they are cheap and have a wide circulation. They should be avoided. They are deceptive, and those who build up their minds on such a foundation will be shallow, frivolous, and conceited.

Let us now for a short time turn our attention to the *best methods of preparing* for an examination.

All who have read carefully up to this point will realise that the writer assumes that no one would attempt to pass a public examination without having a good foundation of general knowledge. Now we may fairly launch out into the question of particulars.

1. First obtain the syllabus of subjects which you will be expected to answer questions upon.

2. Obtain the necessary books required.

3. Fix the certain amount of time to be devoted daily to each subject, and keep to it.

4. Concentrate your whole thought and attention on the subject in hand. Do not for one moment suppose that you can comfortably carry on a conversation with your friends while you are "getting up" the prescribed pages.

5. Make from memory notes of the portions you feel you have mastered, and compare these with the books you have studied.

6. Clear up every difficulty as you go, either by reference to other books or to persons to whom you can apply.

7. Never be satisfied with "that will do" unless you have done your best.

8. Provide yourself with copies of questions, which have already been given in previous examinations, and test yourself by them.

A good preparation for examination can scarcely fail to *produce a good pass*, and to secure this let us sum up a few points to be remembered:—

1. Carry out fully all the printed rules provided for you.

2. Write clearly and distinctly, and spell well.

3. Write your answers (for the most part) at once on the examination paper. Do not make rough copies. There is not time to copy, for one thing; and in copying mistakes often occur.

4. Do not write something that you happen to know in the place of something that you happen not to know. Answer the question asked of you, and keep to the point. The question, the whole question, and nothing but the question, will be a good motto for examinees.

5. Do not spend too much time over the first few questions. Find out how many questions are expected of you and arrange the time given to the best possible advantage.

6. Read your question at least twice before writing your answer, and be sure that you see exactly what is required of you.

This inquiry, though far from complete, will perhaps open up a new vein of thought to some who are interested in examinations. It will be clear that there are several ways of viewing an examination before we give a judgment as to its use, and that there are certain natural defects in examination systems as in most other things in this life. We do not put them forward as being perfect, but we do wish to show that those who dread them most and abuse them most are probably the people who have never thought of them in the true light, and who include among them some persons who regard them in the light of modern innovations, and as instruments of torture.

J. P. M.

HOME TRADES.—III.

BOOKBINDING (continued).



EXT, prepare the plough, securing the cutter, or shear, with the screw, and wedging the frame of the plough with a scrap of paper, if unsteady. Let the point of the shear just touch the leaves of the volume when fixed into the vice. Measure on the outside leaves at each end how much may be spared from the margin, cutting off as little as possible, consistently with obtaining a clean border. Take the hammer and knock the back and top of the book quite square. Place the cutting boards on each side, respectively, the under one beyond the margin of the leaves to be cut, and the top one so as to form a line indicated by the marks already measuring the new margin. Fix all in the laying-press, the back being perfectly even, and turned downwards, ready for the cutting of the foredge (or long way of the leaves). Take the plough by the screw-handles on each side, and begin planing, or ploughing, backwards and forwards, your left hand to the book, turning the handles at each forward pass of the shear from you, but very slightly indeed, because, if it were pressed violently forwards, it would force its way through too many leaves at a