

## WOMEN WHO GO TO COLLEGE.



**I**T could be truthfully said thirty years ago that there was no system in woman's education, and one need not go far backward in the history of the subject to reach the time when, so far as any advanced instruction whatever is concerned, woman was almost completely overlooked. In the Middle Ages, when education was an accomplishment of the very few, and was considered a necessity for no one except the professional clerics, and not always for them, women had a chance to get the small measure of learning that was within the reach of common men. As the world in general grew wiser, women were left behind and were obliged to satisfy in private any scholarly longings that they might have, or to sit illiterate in their towers embroidering shields for graceless Launcelots and singing the "song of love and death."

It happened that at the time when Chaucer was in Italy learning the story of Patient Griselda,—in 1372,—the subject of the education of women was brought to the attention of a worthy father in France by thoughts of his three motherless daughters. He, the knight of La Tour Landry, was led to prepare a book to be used for the education of his own girls and of others. The treatise has been called a "monument of medieval literature." It is a phenomenally indecent book, and if it were exposed for sale to-day would be carried off by the police. This fond father limited the intellectual progress of his daughters to the reading of this book—and what reading! They might sew and brush and do the thousand and one housewifely works that have always been considered commendable in the sex; but as for any training of the mind, it could not be allowed. Down to our own time many persons have not advanced far beyond this father of La Tour Landry. They have thought that if women were suffered to eat of the tree of knowledge the rest of the family would at once "be reduced to the same kind of aerial diet," as Sydney Smith said; and have believed that an educated mother would be "in danger of deserting her infant for a quadratic equation." It was but the other day that a philosophical lecturer in a British capital declared that women, if educated, will cease to be sympathetic; they will be "cultured," but not "self-denying"; they will lack a thou-

sand nameless graces and charms of manner which uneducated women are probably supposed to possess.

It is not worth our while to contemplate the ages between Chaucer and our own days. We need only refer to Milton's scheme for education, confined as it was to men only. Any plan of instruction for the weaker sex was not to be expected from an author who could put into the mouth of his despondent hero the words:

Oh, why did God,  
Creator wise, that peopled highest heaven  
With spirits masculine, create at last  
This novelty on earth, this fair defect  
Of Nature, and not fill the earth at once  
With men as angels?

The story of the progress of the education of women, even in the most favored portions of the world, is one of strange reluctance to give any advantage to the sex. Many of us have been taught to point to the inhabitants of New England as examples of remarkable care for education. We picture them as planting the school by the side of the meeting-house when they landed, and as building the college when the air was still lurid with the flames of their smoking cabins and their lives in danger from the tomahawk; but we forget that their schools were not for women. They thought that education was something adapted to fit a boy to be a minister, or to prepare him for some other liberal calling; but as for mothers and sisters, they might still sit and spin, they might embroider and cook, they might read and write (if they did not print anything), but as for looking into a work on science, or a book in Latin or Greek, that could hardly be imagined. Schools were provided, it is true, at an early period for "all children," but there was only one sex thought of in that connection. It is less than a century ago that a school was established in Boston for both boys and girls, and even then the girls were allowed to attend but half of the year. The first high school for girls was not opened there until 1825, and it was soon shut up because it was too expensive! Forty-five hundred dollars had been wasted in eight months on a few girls. They were after that kept out of the high school until 1852; and before 1877, when a Latin school was established for their special convenience, they were debarred from that mode of preparing for college.

In the mean time Vassar College had begun



its good work. The opening of that institution, in 1865, marks an era. During the years of civil war, when the armies of the republic were engaged in their great struggle and the fortunes of the nation hung in the balance, the millionaire of Poughkeepsie was quietly preparing the foundation for the first fully endowed institution for the collegiate instruction of women that the world ever saw. Mr. Vassar said that it was his intention to accomplish for women "what our colleges are accomplishing for men." This was simple enough and broad enough. It is charming to observe how deeply the pioneer trustees of this woman's college were impressed by the grandeur of their work, and how naïvely they expressed their sentiments. It was "of vital consequence"; it was "a grand and novel enterprise"; they were burdened with "responsibilities before the world"; they were "clothed by the majesty of the law with power" to carry out the generous purpose of the "munificent donor," whose act was excelled by none among the memorable events which signalized the early months of the year 1861, a time certainly rich in events of profound interest. They said that they looked forward to the opening of Vassar College as the beginning of a new era in the education of women.

The power of the time-honored opinions regarding the sphere of woman is plain enough. Deference to them led the projectors to lay much stress upon the domestic, home influences that were to be exerted; to warrant parents that there would be "comfort," and "abundant food"; that the students would be surrounded by "softening" and "elevating" influences — lest, perhaps, they should degenerate into barbarism! The idea was emphasized still more in the statement that there should be no day pupils, because there are no such in the home.

A protest was made against some of the methods that were said to be thoroughly established in our old institutions, and a determination was expressed that Vassar, having no traditions to bind it, should begin aright. It was assumed that the students would not be looking to the learned professions, like men, for teaching was at the time not supposed to fall into that category.

Arguments were brought against the usual order of college studies, and especially against the required four-years' course, then nearly universal. Vassar was to follow "the order of nature," and to make provision for "a diversity of tastes, aptitudes, and inclinations" — for different conditions and circumstances as to age, health, and property. The curriculum was to be no "bed of Procrustes, to which

every girl must adjust herself, however great the violence done to her nature." Students were not to be told that there was a certain number of text-books to be studied from Preface to Index each year, nor encouraged to plod contentedly through them in the best way they were able, whether the subjects proved attractive or not.

It was the plan of the first president and the founder that the college should be arranged in departments, and the students were to carry on their work by subjects, and be largely left to their own choice, though required to accomplish a definite amount before graduation; text-books were to be discarded from the class-room. Thus the tendency towards the elective system, now so strong in most colleges for men, and so much more desirable for women, was anticipated. The founders of the new college aimed at thorough and vigorous cultivation, rather than at too comprehensive and superficial training. The students were to be taught to "direct the faculties with their utmost power to the accomplishment of any task"; time was not to be taken into the account, in order to avoid feverish haste and to make it possible to cultivate the desired thoroughness without fear of falling behind in a race limited to four brief years. The college diplomas were to show that certain work had been done and well done, to represent something real, and not simply to indicate that the young woman had "been in college four years and paid her bills." Finally, Vassar promised to educate woman on the religious side, and to care assiduously also for her physical life. Acting in the spirit of the founder, the trustees declared that they "utterly loathed and repudiated" the spirit of sectarianism, and ordained that "all teaching of human creeds, dogmas, and ceremonials, of sectarian views and denominational distinctions," should be "strictly and forever forbidden."

Thus, upon a firm and broad foundation, Vassar began its work in 1865, and the first admission examinations showed that it was needed, for they proved that the education of woman at the time was confused, barren, undisciplined, wasteful, and superficial. The candidates had earnestness of purpose, but they did not know what they needed. They declared, in the language of the young lady of the day, that they were "passionately fond" of one study, and "utterly detested" another, though they were not well enough acquainted with either to give intelligent reasons for the tastes that they so strongly expressed. They thought, for instance, that chemistry was desirable, because it might help them in the kitchen; and French, because



it would serve in case of a foreign tour; though they had no knowledge of educational discipline and cared less for it.

No wonder that the faculty had difficulty in dealing with the students thus cast upon them. In the heterogeneous medley there were some who appreciated the difficulties, and supported their instructors in their efforts to set up and maintain a high standard, and by the end of the first year college opinion was all one way. The same sentiment has prevailed in all colleges for women; the students have uniformly demanded that the standard should be kept up, and that they should be submitted to the strictest tests required in any institution for men.

Collegiate instruction for women in America encountered the usual reception given to all innovations. Vassar College and its students became the objects of many weak jokes. The students were jibed at as women who "wanted to be men," as college women have been jibed at elsewhere. The name Vassar was carried everywhere. It became typical, and still is. Other colleges have risen, but Vassar remains the woman's college at which the small wit hurls his puny darts. The "Vassar girl" still stands for the girl who goes to college, and about her we hear all sorts of stories, more or less apocryphal. The new college encountered opposition from even good people; many had grave doubts; but the select few welcomed it, and it went steadily on its way. It was followed by Wellesley, Smith, Wells, and Bryn Mawr, and the "Harvard Annex," as it is called, also entered upon its successful career.

There is variety in the colleges for women. At Vassar the students are sheltered in one great building and are taught by both men and women. At Wellesley there was at first the same sort of grand dormitory, but it has become the center of a group which allows smaller clusters of students to gather under more home-like conditions. The teachers there are women only. At Smith men and women teach together, as at Vassar, but the students are separated into small groups under different roofs. The "Harvard Annex" has a character all its own. It did not seek to gather a new faculty, nor to erect imposing dormitories, but simply to repeat to women instruction already given to men in an institution that has been in successful operation two and a half centuries. It carries out the "home" principle farther than either Vassar or

Smith or Wellesley, for it aims to place its students by twos and by threes in established families.

Certainly woman has now obtained opportunity for the collegiate education. Wherever she has been admitted to college, and whenever she has been permitted to compete with men on equal terms for intellectual honors, she has done herself credit. Nowhere has this been so emphatically true as in conservative England. In a paper on the mental inferiority of woman to man, published in the "Nineteenth Century," it was shown that "the average brain-weight of women is about five ounces less than that of men," and by an elaborate and interesting argument woman's "marked inferiority of intellectual power" was proved in detail. We were told that women are more apt than men to break away from the restraints of reason; that they have greater fondness for emotional excitement of all kinds; that in judgment their minds are considerably below those of men; that in creative thought and in simple acquisition there is a marked difference; that women are less deep and thorough than men; that "their physique is not sufficiently robust to stand the strain of severe study," and so on.\*

Scarcely had this argument for the general inferiority of women in "acquisition, origination, and judgment" reached us when the telegraph flashed the news that Miss Ramsay, a student at Girton College, Cambridge, England, had distanced all the men in the university in the race for classical honors, and that Miss Hervey, of the same college, had won like distinction in the department of Medieval and Modern Languages. The London "Times" said in this connection:

Miss Ramsay has done what no Senior Classic before her has ever done. The great names of Kennedy, Lushington, Wordsworth, Maine, and more recently of Butler and Jebb, have come first in the Classical Tripos; Miss Ramsay alone has been placed in a division to which no one but herself has been found deserving of admittance. . . . No one has ventured to think that four years' work could be enough to make a Senior Classic. We have proof that it is ample. Most of Miss Ramsay's competitors will have taken fourteen years to do less than she has contrived to do in four years. Miss Ramsay's example suggests a possibility that men may have something to learn in the management of a department of study which they have claimed as peculiarly their own.

To this it may be added that Miss Ramsay kept herself in full health, did not overwork, and accomplished her examinations easily.

\* The author of this paper, Mr. George J. Romanes, writes with evident calmness and self-restraint. He frankly confesses that as a matter of fact he has met "wonderfully few cases of serious break-downs"; which only goes to show, he says, "of what good stuff our English girls are made." Since American observ-

ers notice the same phenomenon, we are at liberty to reply that the fact mentioned does *not* go to show "of what good stuff our English girls are made," but rather to prove that the "physique of young women as a class" is "sufficiently robust to stand the strain of severe study" and actually to improve under it.



In the face of facts like these and of many more that might be adduced, we cannot believe that nature has placed before woman any constitutional barrier to the collegiate life, but that so far as physical reasons are concerned, she may enter upon it with no more fear than a man may. That an increasing number of women will do this, and that it is best for the state that all should do it who are destined to be instructors of the youth of the republic, is in my mind not at all doubtful.

What is to be the result? That is the crucial question. On the physical health of the educated woman it will be beneficial. Observation, so far as it is now possible, shows that the work of the full college course is favorable to bodily health. The regularity of life, the satisfaction of attainment, the pleasant companionship, the general broadening of the girl-nature, tend in that direction. Speaking of "nervous or neuropathic" young women, Dr. Charles Follen Folsom, of the department of nervous diseases in the Boston Hospital, writes that it is his opinion that "the higher education is a conservative rather than a destructive force."\*

On schools I have already said that the effect is good. The grade of instruction in establishments for girls has been materially raised since Vassar College began, and those pupils who go no further than the primary schools are much benefited. The influence is reflex, for the educated girls become in turn teachers, and they are better teachers than their predecessors. Many college-bred girls never teach. Neither do all college-bred men. They go out into the world and raise the average of general intelligence; they elevate their own households and exert an influence in the sphere of the private citizen. The standard is raised at home, and home is the fountain-head.

Women who marry after having been liberally educated make more satisfactory unions than they otherwise would have made. Women were formerly trained to no outlook but matrimony, and were encouraged to cultivate no accomplishments not considered useful to that end. When, therefore, that end was missed, all was missed. There was no outlet of action in which the energies of her feelings might be discharged. Such a defective education, adapted to heighten emotional sensibility, and to weaken the reasoning powers, tended to increase the predominance of the affective life and to lead woman to base her judgment upon feelings and intuitive perceptions rather than upon rational processes, and to direct

her conduct by impulse rather than to control it by will.

Educated women marry as naturally as others; but the fact that mental training has led them to subject their impulses to reason gives them an advantage in the choice of husbands, and it may well be expected that ill-considered marriages will be decreased in number. The rector of the University of Liège devoted his inaugural address in 1862 to the subject of the education of women, and remarked:

In Belgium and France most young persons in the higher classes—sons of the rich or of those who expect to be rich—are sunk in deplorable ignorance. They pursue no kind of higher studies, or if they enter upon them, they are very soon discouraged. To what does this tend? It causes them to be almost always without any inspiration to the taste, without any habit of serious occupation. They live in an atmosphere in which intellectual labor is not honored, in which, far from considering it a glorious or even a worthy duty, it is placed below the satisfaction of the love of pleasure. This deplorable situation arises from the false education given to the women of the higher classes. As a general rule they cannot comprehend what constitutes the true power and dignity of a man, and therefore they accept as husbands men as ignorant and as idle as themselves. As a natural consequence they cannot bring up their sons to be men; they cannot give to their country well-instructed, devoted, and energetic citizens.

I have been told, even in cultivated, intellectual circles, that a young woman had better be in the kitchen or laundry than in the laboratory or class-room of a college. "Women should be trained," such persons say, "to be wives and mothers." The finger of scorn has been lightly pointed at the mentally cultivated mothers and daughters who are unable to cook and scrub, who cannot make a mince-pie or a plum-pudding. Such persons forget with surprising facility all the cases of women who neglect the kitchen to indulge in the love-sick sentimentality to which they have been trained; who think too much of possible matrimonial chances to endanger them by scrubbing, or by giving ground for the suspicion that they cultivate any other faculty than the power to apostrophize the moonlight and to long for a lover. They do not care to remember that it is no whit better to wither under the influence of ignorance or sentiment, to cultivate a fondness for "gush," than to dry up the sensibilities like a book-worm, or grow rigid and priggish as a pedant. It is as bad to stunt human nature as to over-stimulate it—to stop its progress in one way as in another. The danger is in going to extremes. The mass of men choose the golden mean, and we may trust women to avoid extravagance in the pursuit of learning. We may and ought to give her every help in the direction of life that her brothers possess. It is no

\* "Relations of our Public Schools to the Disorders of the Nervous System," p. 187.



longer doubtful, it is plain, that whatever other rights woman should have, those of the intellectual kingdom ought to be hers fully and freely. She should be the judge herself of how far she should go in exploring the mysteries of nature and of science.

It is not a question of putting all our girls through college; it is not even a question of their being taught in the same institutions and

classes with men when they go to college. The form in which women shall be taught and the subjects that they shall study are of minor importance at the moment, and time will settle them in a natural way. The great desideratum is that they be given the collegiate education when they need it, and that they be the judges of their own needs.

Arthur Gilman.

## BIRD MUSIC.



Some approaches the haunts of the yellow-breasted chat, the old rule for children is reversed—he is everywhere heard, nowhere seen. Seek him ever so slyly where the ear has just detected him, instantly you hear him elsewhere; and this with no sign of a flight. The chat revels in eccentricities. Some tones of his loud voice are musical, others are harsh; and he delights in uttering the two kinds in the same breath, occasionally slipping in the notes of other birds and, on some authorities, imitating those of quadrupeds. I have discovered in his medleys snatches from the robin, catbird, oriole, kingfisher, and brown thrasher. Wilson refers to his “great variety of odd and uncouth monosyllables.” I have detected three such, “char,” “quirp,” and “whirr,” and they were given with distinctness.

The male birds, generally preceding the females in their migrations, locate and at once begin a series of vocal and gymnastic exercises. A marked example of these performances is a jerky flight straight upwards perhaps fifty feet, and a descent in the same fussy fashion. (Though this exhibition is eminently characteristic of the chat, one observer informs me that he has seen the woodcock and the linnet so employed.) The favorite time for it is just before dusk; but if there be a moon, a carousal of some sort goes on all night, the evident intention being to let no migrating lady-chat pass without a hearty invitation to cease her wandering, and to accept a husband and a home.

After all, the chat can hardly be said to have a song. The longest strain that I have heard from him is without melody, closely resembling the rhythmic movement of the yellow-billed cuckoo's effort, but wholly unlike it in quality of tone. He will burst out with loud,

rapid tones, then suddenly retard and diminish to the close:



In the course of an hour I have heard this strain repeated many times, and am satisfied that it has no one pitch or key. The following are the principal notes of this chat, but it is not to be understood that they always come in like order:

