

ORNAMENTAL, OR USEFUL?

A GOSSIP ON THE DOMESTIC EDUCATION OF WOMEN.



GOOD morning, Mrs. Bayle; I've just snatched five minutes to run and see you. I am so dreadfully busy and overworked, I never seem to have a moment for anything. How cool and comfortable you look here! but then, you don't know what it is to be hurried and flurried, do you?" and Miss Norman dropped into a low chair in the shady porch of an old-fashioned farmhouse, and fanned herself violently with some sheets of MS. "It is such a comfort that we have got the college furnished at last, and secured such an admirable staff of professors. Does not the prospectus read beautifully? but of course you've had a copy sent you, and, equally of course, you will send your girls. We were sadly in want of some higher education for women in North Addington. The ladies' schools were shamefully inefficient and behind the times: indeed, there was no culture possible. I don't think we can be too thankful to the founders of the North Addington College: it offers such wonderful advantages to our girls, opens quite new possibilities for them; they can receive the very highest education and take a good degree at the smallest possible cost, and then there is the inestimable advantage of being able to keep your dear girls at home."

"Yes, that certainly is a privilege, and I mean to avail myself of it," Mrs. Bayle said quietly, when Miss Norman stopped, literally for want of breath. "Hester and Kitty are very useful to me, and I really do not see how I could spare them, even to listen to the edifying lectures of Professor Nowall on pre-historic man, or Herr Addler on Scandinavian folk-lore."

"But, my dear Mrs. Bayle," Miss Norman gasped, "you do not mean to say you are not going to send your dear girls to any of the lectures? As a mother, as a woman, you surely would not stand in the way of their advancement? You know perfectly well that what was considered a good education a few years ago, is now regarded as crass ignorance. Science, art, and literature have all advanced with giant strides, and we women must keep up with the times: that is, such of us as have to earn our bread; and indeed in these bad times we none of us know what we may come to. Hester and Kitty are both bright, intelligent girls; think twice, dear Mrs. Bayle, before you deprive them of the opportunity of cultivating their minds—of acquiring knowledge that may be useful to them all their lives. I quite counted on your girls. I had great hopes of Hester," Miss Norman said plainly.

"And Hester will not disappoint you," Mrs. Bayle replied, with a proud smile. "She is a good girl, and in every way worthy of the interest you take in her;

but to tell you the truth, Miss Norman, I do not think much of this college scheme."

"Oh, Mrs. Bayle! and I have been appointed Professor of Geology. I thought you would be so pleased."

"And so I am, and offer you my most sincere congratulations. I am sure you will do your duty faithfully and well. But let me explain myself fully, dear Miss Norman, so that we may rightly understand each other. When this prospectus came a few days ago, my husband and I talked the matter over. We have, as you know, a large family, five boys and two girls, Hester and Kitty being the eldest, and being girls, had the first claim on us for education, and according to our means we did our best for them. We kept them at the best boarding-school in the county for five years, and they returned six months ago, finished. They sing a little, play a little, draw a little, talk a little French and German, and write prettily; they can enter and leave a room with propriety. I assume they understand 'the use of the globes,' and possibly have some smattering of chemistry and botany, and other natural sciences. Judging by all the prizes they took, they must have learned everything the very select academy could teach."

"Yes, dear Mrs. Bayle; but think how very superficial the education is compared with that of the college," Miss Norman interrupted. "We have such clever professors, and such a variety of subjects: pure and mixed mathematics, ancient and modern languages, natural sciences——"

"Yes, I see by the prospectus that you undertake to teach a great deal, but how much of it would be of use to my girls, Miss Norman? We are plain farmers, and we live quietly and simply, and to live at all in these trying times we have all to put a shoulder to the wheel and work. When the girls came home and exhibited their prizes and accomplishments, we were honestly proud of them.

"'Now, girls,' their father said, 'you have shown us all the ornamental part of your education; let us hear a little about the useful. Which of you can bake the best batch of bread, or make the best tub of butter, wash and iron, make a gown and mend it? who can best preserve, and pickle, and brew, and milk, and feed the calves and chicks—eh, lassies? which of you is cleverest, and going to be the greatest help to mother? she's done all for many a year, and it's time she had a rest. You are both fairly well educated, and I hope, like sensible girls, that you will go on improving your minds, and not forget your book-learning; but I want you to be useful too, and helpful to your mother. I want you both to be good housekeepers, so that you may know how to manage your own homes some day.'

"Both girls coloured and looked confused; but Hester spoke up bravely: 'We are very ignorant, father; we know nothing of housekeeping, cooking,

or plain needlework, but we are both willing to learn and anxious to be of use. If mother will only teach us, I'll take the dairy and poultry, if Kitty will take the baking and cooking; and I am sure we can soon learn, at least to help."

"The very next day they began, and since then they have gone on steadily learning. Now Hester takes entire charge of the dairy, and enables me to do with one maid instead of two; Kitty is a most excellent housekeeper: I have leisure to do my own needlework instead of paying exorbitant prices for it. We make all our own dresses with the help of a sewing-machine, and yet we are never too busy to have a little music in the evening, and no day passes that the girls can't find time to read for an hour. They are happy, contented, helpful, and a real comfort to me. Do you think, Miss Norman, that a collegiate course would make them any more so?"

"Possibly not, Mrs. Bayle, if you mean them to go on baking bread and making butter all their lives," Miss Norman said stiffly; "but suppose they had to earn their bread, as so many women have to do nowadays, they could only go as domestic servants."

"It is much more difficult to find a good domestic servant than a good governess," Mrs. Bayle said pleasantly. "At the best of times the demand for good governesses is very limited, and judging by the advertisements in six papers that we have carefully gone over, the supply is greatly in excess of the demand. Highly educated and accomplished women remain out of situations for months and months, and then accept lower salaries than the cook or ladies'-maid, have to work harder, and have far less comfort and independence. There must be governesses, of course,

and it is most desirable that they should be highly trained and efficient. Colleges in this age of culture are no doubt a necessity, but for my own part, I think the higher, or rather the highest education of women consists in a thorough practical knowledge of all domestic duties: a knowledge that makes a woman entirely independent of circumstances, or rather, mistress of them. A woman who cannot cook a dinner as well as eat it, make a dress as well as wear it, a woman who cannot turn her hand to anything when occasion requires, who is not able to train her servants practically, and teach them the value of economy of time as well as money, is not, in my opinion, *educated* at all, though she may be very much cultivated, and even have been to college and taken a degree. Look at Hester in her dairy, now—would she look any fresher, healthier, happier in a cap and gown, or be more usefully employed in poring over conic sections or reading questionable Greek plays? Take my word for it, Miss Norman, girls would be all the better, and homes all the happier, if more time and attention were given to domestic affairs, and if every woman *knew how* to be her own cook, housekeeper, and dressmaker: such things are far more easily learned than dead languages or mathematics, and are of infinitely more use to a woman in going through life."

Miss Norman rose, and gathering together her prospectuses, examination papers, MSS., and other impedimenta, said "good morning," mentally resolving never again to call at One Elm Farm, as Mrs. Bayle's ideas on "higher education" were sadly at variance with those of the Professor of Geology at the North Addington College for the Higher Education of Women.

H. B. D.

CURIOUS CORPORATION CUSTOMS.



MOST of our Corporations have an eventful history, intimately associated as they have been, from time immemorial, with some of the most memorable occurrences in the political and social life of bygone years. Indeed, a casual survey of a few of the old customs connected with our English municipalities will suffice to show how active a part these bodies have generally taken in all matters which may have affected their privileges, or enhanced their prestige. It should be noted, too, that many of our Corporation customs which, nowadays, seem somewhat meaningless, were quite the reverse in days gone by; the alterations in the laws and institutions of the country having, in numerous cases, rendered their existence unnecessary. Hence, certain usages are retained as relics of the past, and are valued from the unbroken line of evidence they

afford of the authority attached to our Corporations in olden times. In the first place, then, it is interesting to find how many of the old Corporation insignia have become identified with some of the most noteworthy customs; several of the ancient maces having served as drinking-cups. The top of a handsome silver-gilt mace, given by George, first Earl of Berkeley, who commanded the royal fleet at the Restoration, to the Corporation of Berkeley, was for many years used as a drinking-cup at the conclusion of the feasts. When the mayor came to the last toast, the head of the mace was unscrewed from the stem, and the crown unscrewed from the top. The cup part of the mace was then filled with punch, and the crown placed upon it, in which condition it was presented to the mayor, who exclaimed, "Prosperity to the Corporation and Borough of Berkeley." In connection with this ceremony, an amusing anecdote is related by a correspondent of *Notes and Queries* (2nd S.V., p. 520), to the effect that some years ago a medical member of the Cor-