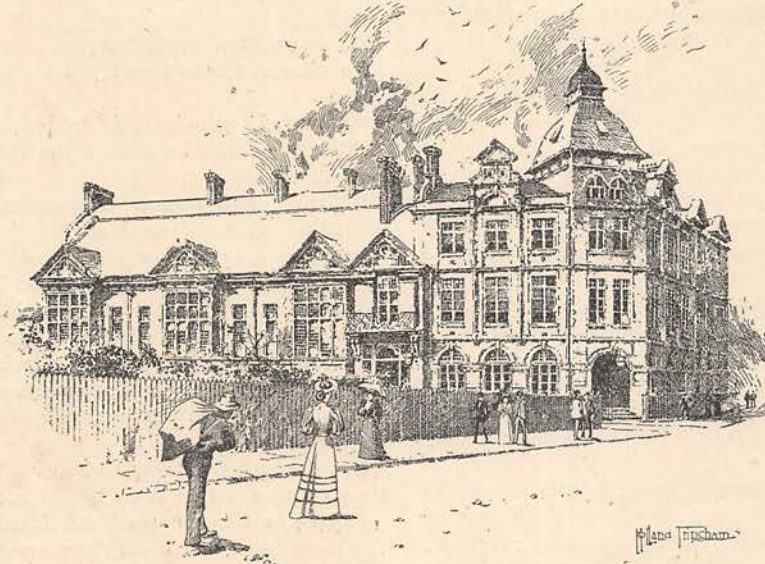


THE EDUCATION OF OUR GIRLS.
A TALK WITH MISS BUSS.
BY RAYMOND BLATHWAYT.



THE NORTH LONDON COLLEGIATE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

A LARGE and handsome building stands near Camden Road Station. This building is the well-known High School—The North London Collegiate School for Girls, which is ruled firmly and wisely by Miss Buss, than whom few women have done so much for the advancement and welfare of their sex as she has done.



Frances M. Buss

Concerning the recent visit which I paid to her, there is so much to be said that I cannot do better than plunge *in medias res* without further preliminaries. Miss Buss, who is a woman well advanced in years, of a charming appearance and disposition, and who was accompanied by her chief assistant, Mrs. Sophie Bryant, D.Sc., at once suggested that I should first make a tour of the building in their company: a proposition to which I gladly assented. The first room I was shown was the library: a beautiful room, in which a few girls were seated, quietly reading and writing. This room itself would be a revelation to any woman acquainted only with the old *régime*. Here was a quietude and a stateliness, a calm and a repose associated only with all that is most secluded, most scholarly; how different from the cold, bare, crowded, noisy schoolroom of a bygone day! Then came a museum, filled chiefly with geological specimens—another significant sign of the times, and one that is much appreciated by the rising generation. We stood a moment here discussing the developments of the last few years.

"The girls," said Miss Buss to me, "are so much more interested in what is going on around them than they used to be. Life is so much fuller for them than it was in my early days. Quite apart from their regular work, they have literary societies here, and debating societies, in all of which they take the deepest interest. In the Debating Society, for instance, they discuss some very abstruse questions indeed."

"What is the subject of your next debate?" she asked of a bright young girl, some sixteen years of age, who was passing at the moment.

"The Old Age Pensions scheme," replied this young lady, with a sublime unconsciousness of the humorous contrast afforded between her youthful personality and the apparently dry-as-dust nature of the subject for debate. "And last week," she continued, "we discussed the Eight Hours Bill."

How far such precocity is desirable, or its encouragement well advised, is a very debatable matter, but Miss Buss, on my remarking to that effect, assured me that the girls were as feminine, as bright, and as youthful as ever they were.

"Indeed," she very significantly added, "these new interests keep girls out of much mischief. The old system, which did not half occupy their time or their minds, was full of evils in many respects. In the Literary Society they discuss such books as 'The Virginians,' 'Hereward the Wake,' 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' Macaulay's Essays, Tennyson's 'In Memoriam,' Browning's Poems, and the like. We have also a Science Club. This is very popular, and chiefly because it is also very practical. For instance, frequent excursions are organised by the members to various places of interest. Last week, the Club paid a visit by special permission to Doulton's Works."

By this time we found ourselves standing in the great hall, and immediately beneath a very fine organ. The light poured in through painted windows, which had been placed to the memory of teachers and pupils alike who had passed away. In this room linger the best traditions of the school life. Here day by day the life and interests of the establishment are focussed; here prayers are read, examinations are held, concerts are given, festivities are enjoyed. It is the centre of all the school life. There is a large dining-hall, where the girls are provided with a light but substantial dinner, of which, or of lunch, with admirable common-sense and a humanity undreamed of in the olden days, it is insisted all girls shall partake, and at which they are allowed to talk as loudly and as much as they please: which is another sensible rule. The department that most interested me, however, was the Gymnasium, where all the girls in the school have musical drill every day. At the time of my visit, I found a number of the pupils going through a special medical drill, under the immediate superintendence of a lady doctor, who decides after a careful examination, with the concurrence of the parents, if any girl requires a special course of calisthenics or gymnastics.

Then there was the Slöjd School, at which, for the first time in my life, I saw female carpenters hard at work, and was able to admire the deft, easy manner with which they handled their tools, and the clever work they turned out.

In each room I noticed a motto hanging upon the wall.

"That," said Miss Buss, "is the motto for the term. We always choose a verse from the Bible, or a few lines of poetry, or a sentence of John Ruskin or some well-known writer, and that serves as the motto for the term. A favourite one of mine is by Lowell—

"Greatly begin! Though thou have time
But for a line, be that sublime,
Not failure; but low aim is crime."

In the class-rooms, of which there is a very large number, I noticed that each girl had her own desk, and I noticed further the charming manner in which each room was decorated.

"The girls themselves undertake the decoration of



(From a photograph by Messrs. W. & D. Downey, Ebury Street, S.W.)

John Downey
Sofia Bryant

the rooms," explained my hostess; "and some of our window-gardens are very beautiful specimens of their work and ingenuity."

All this time my readers will understand that I am moving, the solitary man, amid a very hive of feminine industry. Girls of all ages are around me, and engaged in every kind of study and occupation.

"Take, for instance, the VI. Form," said Miss Buss, "which contains about twenty-five girls, from seventeen to nineteen years of age; they are preparing mostly for University Scholarships, or reading for the London Intermediate. Their mathematics and classics are very far advanced indeed."

In the Drawing School a large class was engaged in designing, in sketching, and in drawing both from the flat and the round; and the room, a regular artist's studio, was full of models from the antique and casts of heads, hands, and limbs. I asked Mrs. Bryant if games and athletics were popular in the school.

"Very much so," she replied. "As a rule, our girls are very athletic. We have sports once a year, racing, jumping, etc. And, as you see, we have capital fives courts and tennis courts, and we have a regular tennis competition every year with other well-known High Schools. We consider that a due taste for physical exercise and the enjoyment of games is as

necessary to be cultivated as a taste and capacity for study. We have here a regular Games Club for the special cultivation of this taste, and girls are particularly encouraged to belong to this club. I am rather against regular organisation of games myself. I think the instinct must be as far as possible purely spontaneous. It is an instinct which must be sustained by more subtle means than mere games. It may run through work and all life, an under-current of activity bubbling up here and there in the most unexpected manner. It is a great factor in school-girl life. A mistress with a profound instinct for play in charge of a form for a year will unconsciously call it out in the great majority of her pupils within that time."

"In fact," I replied, "you believe that a capacity for judicious 'frivol' is a really good thing, and can only be found in really clever people?"

"Precisely," she replied. "It is a most wholesome element in our nature."

"And do you find that, on the whole, the Higher Education system brings out all that is best in a woman?" I asked.

"Yes, indeed, we do," replied Miss Buss. "We turn out business-like, capable, rational women. A girl does not become unsexed by higher education. On the contrary, her feminine characteristics become more marked. Develop all a woman's faculties, mental, spiritual, physical, and you perceive a broadening, not a narrowing, effect. Even in religious matters the mind is broadened; it is not secularised, for the naturally conservative tendency of a woman's mind prevents her rashly flinging aside the old land-marks."

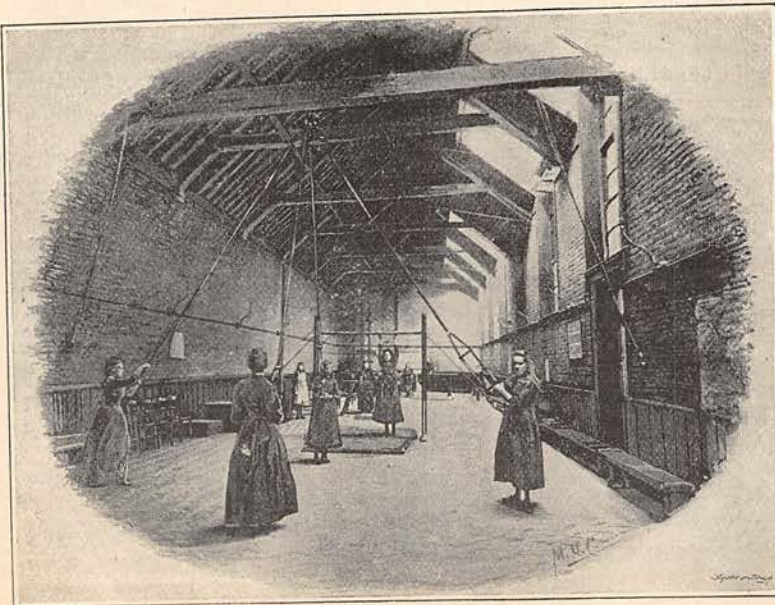
"Is your discipline very strict?" I asked.

"It is, and it isn't," was the reply. "As much as possible it is left in the hands of the girls themselves. We inculcate a sense of individual responsibility. But

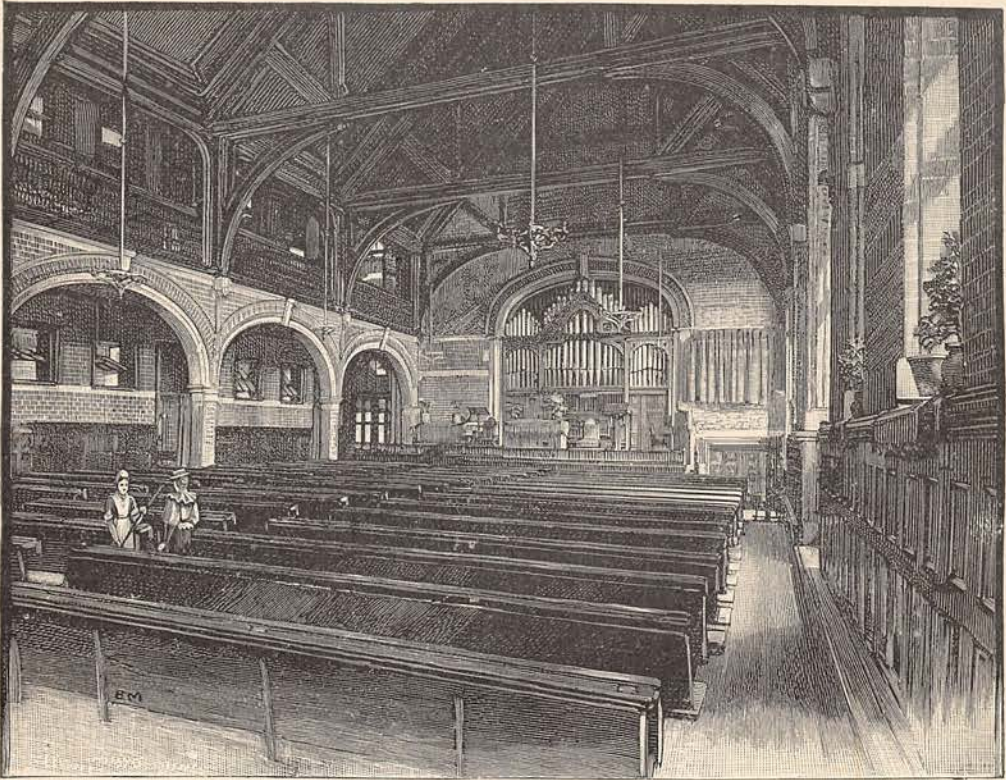
I do not wish you to understand that the mistresses have no voice in the matter. On the contrary, the responsibility is laid upon all, and forms a connecting link between pupils and teachers; and I cannot insist too strongly upon the influence that a mistress can exercise over her pupils. A wise use of influence is the secret of all discipline. But as much as possible, the exercise of discipline is left in the hands of the girls themselves. Each Form, except the lowest and highest, elects two monitors by ballot, who, without the power to punish, help the teachers by their personal influence only. The VI. Form elect ten prefects by ballot, and it is a remarkable thing that they are almost invariably right in their choice of girls. A prefect can interfere in any part of the school where she sees matters are going wrongly. They can summon a refractory girl to the library to meet the whole body of prefects, and I am told that such a proceeding is regarded with the greatest possible awe. Our own punishments are few and far between. Work not produced at the proper time, or which shows traces of carelessness and indolence, has simply to be produced or reproduced later, and the offender has, moreover, to write a statement of her offence, duly signed, in a book, called 'The Appearing Book,' of which there is one in each form.

"All breaches of rule are similarly recorded, and if any girl 'appears' more than a certain number of times in a half-term, she has to stay for an hour's work as an imposition in the afternoon. Impositions are not common, and are in this way made serious matters. A form in which no girl has an imposition for the half-term is placed on what is called 'the golden list,' and is entitled to a 'gratification,' in the form of half-an-hour's play or other amusement. Thus the individual is punished by being the cause of a loss—slight, but perceptible—of honour and pleasure

to her community. Her social motives are evoked in support of self-regarding ones, at the same time that public opinion is stimulated in favour of order. It is not found that there is any tendency for this public opinion to become in the least oppressive and hard on the weaker members. It is the old principle of the ancient Romans revived, the sacrifice of the individual to the good of the Commonwealth. But we allow no lynch law; and again, we never keep a girl in. You see, our girls here are day girls, and they have to leave at a certain fixed hour every day; her mother knows exactly when to expect each girl, which militates against the evils to which ignorant outsiders say these High Schools are exposed."



THE GYMNASIUM.



THE GREAT HALL.

"All this must exercise a very healthy effect upon your pupils. You are doing away with the hysterical, self-conscious, sentimental young lady of Miss Austen's days, or with the tendency to what our grandmothers call the 'vapours'?"

"Exactly," she replied. "We train the girls to see that character depends upon little things. As I once said in a London paper, so I say to-day: we teach self-restraint; we deal as much as possible with each girl individually. We really seek to know the individual idiosyncrasies and personalities of our pupils. The discipline here, though very healthy, is very decided. It is a complete wall around them, beyond which they cannot escape; we appeal also as much as we can to their common-sense and to their good feeling. The result is, a new kind of girl is growing up, who in her turn will be the mother of a very different person from the sentimental young lady of half a century ago. Already we begin to trace the influence and effect of our system in the children of girls who were pupils here twenty years ago."

"And as to the vexed question of home interference with school duties, Mrs. Bryant," said I, as Miss Buss left the room for a few moments: "do you find that home influence militates against school influence, and *vice versa*?"

"No," she replied; "where the two work hand in hand, the blend is exceedingly satisfactory. Where

there is co-operation and mutual support between the two sets of influences at home and at school, the best results so far may be expected; and where there is lack of such co-operation and support there must be waste, even though neither home nor school is guilty of neglect. Hence it is essential that there should be sympathy for the home education at school and for the school education at home: essential, therefore, that though the work has to be divided, the ideal should not be. The head-mistress of a school and her assistants need always to remember that a most important part of a girl's education depends on the enforcement of the normal home claim that she should 'make herself useful in the house.'

"School claims must be so framed as to leave room for the home claim, most especially in the early years of a child's life, and the right-minded schoolmistress will always support this home claim when opportunity occurs. Half the moral benefit of this High School system arises from the fact that the girl still lives within the sweet influence of a good home. In fact, we teach here that a girl is only half educated if she is not taught to display willing usefulness at home. It is a disgrace to have useless fingers, unreadiness of mind in household ways, and inaptness to take a place in the social home circle. A High School would be a curse to a neighbourhood instead of a blessing, if it unfitted the girls for home-life."

At this moment Miss Buss returned, and placed in my hands the School Magazine for the month of June, 1893. It began with an essay by one of the girls on "The Term's Motto":—

"For knowledge is a steep which few may climb,
But duty is a path which all may tread."

"We were talking a short time ago on our Debating Society," said Miss Buss; "and here you see is the record of a Parliamentary debate which was held recently on 'The Payment of Members.' Here is the opposition offered by one very vigorous damsel. 'The effect of the salaries,' she contended, 'would be to produce a class of political adventurers, who looked on being members of Parliament as a very comfortable way of earning their living, and that the government of the country would fall into the hands of unworthy men, who would establish a class tyranny. The manual labourer could not be expected to make any thorough study of the laws of Economics; and the kind of people to profit by the arrangement would be briefless barristers and doctors without patients. But should we pay men when we give them the high honour of

representing the nation? As well pay them for their love of duty, of honour, of glory. Let us keep our Parliament free from such a stain!"

There, mothers and fathers, is the simple product of a simpler day; there is a specimen of the rising generation! Who could conceive one of Jane Austen's heroines, or the damsels of Miss Burney's day, or the merry-hearted girls in big crinolines and with a croquet-mallet in hand, bent on the subjugation of some gallant soldier or mild young curate, whom poor John Leech so loved to draw, coming out with such phrases and such opinions? *Tempora mutantur nos et in illis mutamur!*

But these same girls are excellent tennis-players; their performance in the concert-room far excels any of a previous generation; their sense of humour is keen and frequent; their whole life is deepened and broadened; their womanhood is a far more complete and joyous thing than ever it has been before.

Some four or five hundred girls attend the school daily, and the staff of teachers is never under sixty-five to seventy.

WHAT TO WEAR: CHIT-CHAT ON DRESS.

BY OUR LADY CORRESPONDENT.

NEW MILLINERY FOR THE SPRING.

FROM whence emanates that strange magic influence whose edict rules our selection in garments and head-gear, and whose fiat we await with so much expectation and so readily adopt?

"Fashion's Decree" is the title we give to this mystic authority, and from thence is evolved the novelties for this spring season. These are in reality but the "repeat" in the design woven in the loom of Fashion some sixty or a hundred years since, but wisely selected, and shorn of many of the absurdities which characterised them in "olden times." The marked feature of the styles now in vogue is decidedly "Character"; no aimlessly-designed hat or bonnet will now obtain—they must in every instance bear the impress of a *raison d'être*. Fashion is absolute on that point.

The "Liberty" hat we have illustrated is a good example; it is in the style worn by the beauties of the time of Gainsborough and Sir J. Reynolds, and has the distinguishing broad brim slightly raised at one side, and a peculiarly small "box" crown and group of plumes placed slightly to the front. This period of dress supplies ample scope for choice in design; and when successfully reproduced, an artistic effect and becoming outline are secured.

The black velvet of which the hat is composed forms a good background to the face and hair. The plumes—sometimes white, or, as in this instance, black—are chosen from the beautifully long, soft, curly feathers for which this house is noted.

These artistic hats are much admired at "private views," or when completing the toilets of a "bevy of



"LIBERTY" HAT.

(From a photograph by Walcry, Regent Street, W.)