A NEGLECTED STUDY.

Many girls on leaving school are under the impression that all their studies are finished and their education completed, and consequently that they have nothing more to do but to dress, flirt, and amuse themselves until some one that they care about offers to marry them. Now, although it is quite right and natural for all girls to look forward to having a home of their own, few seem to think it necessary to qualify themselves for so responsible a position as that of a mistress of a household.

We intend, therefore, to show that some qualifications are necessary, and what the chief of these are; and for the present our remark will apply to all girls who have left, or are about to leave, school—those who are entering upon that important period of a woman’s life, the interval between her school days and the commencement of her married life. It is then that so much useful and practical knowledge on household matters, needlework, economy, and various other points which all tei upon the happiness of a household may be acquired. Then also is the time for developing any well-marked taste or talent—for supplementing studies begun at school which there was no opportunity or time to prosecute as might be wished; in fact, for laying the foundation of intelligent interests and a happy, well-balanced disposition.

Now, the chief problem to happiness is industry. Habits of industry and economy of time are formed early in life, and it is for this reason most important that, after being released from the regular routine of school occupations, one should at once begin to have a settled programme of work for each day so far as is practicable. We say, intentionally, so far as is practicable; for many girls, even where they are not obliged to do something towards earning their expenses, are at least expected to help in the household, and take special duties upon themselves at once. These, of course, must be the first consideration, but they cannot be all that goes on, and it is therefore the leisure hours that we would speak—the hours that so many spend in dressing themselves out and polishing shoes. To be dressed in the latest novelties in the milliners’ shops and criticising another’s toilette. If, as we said before, a girl looks forward to being the mistress of a home, she ought to qualify herself for the position, just as much as she would qualify herself for a governess’s situation. The care of a household is no light matter; it requires of a woman of business, of energy, of ability in economy and management, of foresight, thoughtfulness, and a hundred matters depending upon them, which no one can leave unnoticed without serious disadvantages.

In the first place, then, so far as a study is concerned, a girl, upon leaving school, must make herself thoroughly acquainted with the first principles of good housekeeping. The present ports, for under this heading come not only health matters, but details conducive to comfort, economy, and the general well-being of all members of the family. Besides, it necessitates a study of the human body and the health of the organs, such as the heart, lungs, kidneys, and stomach, and the methods of their preservation. The body, therefore, is the basis of health. The management and regulation of the household must be regarded as cleanliness, ventilation, and the removal of bad smells, &c.; and, last, but not least, the management of the body in illness, and the prevention of the spread of infectious or preventable diseases.

Health is, after all, the first consideration; without it no amount of comfort, luxury, or wealth can give happiness or make life enjoyable, and it is, therefore, one of the most important studies for a girl. The mistress of a household must be familiar with the health of her inmates practically in her hands; the nursemaid too great extent holds the health of the children entrusted to her care in her, whilst the cook, with a knowledge of the processes of animals coming from the animal and vegetable matter, and their dangerous, sometimes fatal, results, would not willingly allow refuse to accumulate and undermine the health of a household. In fact, take it from what point you will, there is no lack of life a girl may be born in which some knowledge of health matters is not necessary. If she be ignorant of the laws which govern healthy life or of those which govern the progress and development of disease, what is the result? We fear the amount of preventable illness in the world is our best answer.

Let, then, one portion of the day—one hour a day, or even one hour a week—for this purpose. I mention here only the first indications of a girl on leaving school. Matters relating to domestic economy and health are of a more important nature, and are the study of the housekeeping, the mistress of a household. And it is thus more necessary to have a knowledge of the laws which govern the progress of harmonious sounds, or of the laws of perspective and the art of colouring; and to the structure of the wonderful organs which go to form the grandest work in creation, or the changes upon which disease and death are based. And yet apart from the being one of the most interesting studies, it is one of the most widely useful and vitally important. The attention which has been bestowed upon sanitary matters, shows that people have at last begun to wake up to the importance of their influence. But yet not nearly sufficient work has been done. There are still thousands of lives annually sacrificed in Great Britain alone through the carelessness, or more often ignorance, of health matters; moreover, the duty is perpetuating in all its branches.

Who would not like to know after having learnt the requirements of the body in health, how to preserve the harmony and beauty of the body, and to contain the necessary elements in the cheapest and most nutritious forms? which is the most nutritious and economical, or the cooking of different kinds of food? how best to put water or to discover whether it is pure? why it is so necessary to be scrupulously clean in all cooking matters; the necessity for pure air in our rooms; the healthful influence of growing flowers in a room; the sanitary importance of thoroughly cleaning living rooms and of fresh linen to beds; or why a small waist, or this or that deformity, is so unfavourable, and why anything tight discloses the figure, feet, or hands? Or, again, how fever genius spread? what is their action after contact with a pre disposed person; why it is so strictly necessary to isolate a fever patient; to disinfect a sick room, its bedding and furniture; and what the precautions to be observed in the case of such a person suffering from tuberculosis or other contagious or serious illnesses? All of these points may be thoroughly studied, both theoretically and practically, without the slightest fear of the danger of source-shocking, which some hold in such dread, being applied to their students. The peasant woman has always formed a good butt for the ridicule of comic and satirical poets of all times and nations, and rightly so, for woman’s work, like charity, should always begin at home; but no one has held up the mirror to her features with such humorous and well-pointed ridicule as Moliere, in several of his comedies, and especially in the one entitled “Les Femmes Savantes.” As for Chrysables, the master of the house, says of them—

“L'urne belle ren rie, en bientot quelque histoire,
L'autre riee a des vers, quand je demande a boire.”

History and verses may be all very well for the unmarried, or for those whose husbands’ pockets will allow of the luxury of a house-servant; but otherwise a woman must first think of her home affairs, and then, if time allows, turn for her recreation to her favourite pursuits.

BEWARE OF TRIFLES.

Beware of trifles, for you never can tell to what they may grow. Even a drop of honey has before now brought about the death of some one, as may be gathered from reading Arabian tales, which represents a common state of matters in the East. “Petty wars,” says Mr. Lane, “occasionally by events arising from petty trifles have frequently among the Arabs to the present day.”

There was a huntsman who hunted the wild beasts in the desert, and one day he entered a cave in a mountain and found in a hollow which was filled with honey. So he placed some of that honey in a water-skin which he had with him; then he carried it upon his shoulder and conveyed it to the city, having with him a hound that was dear to him. And the huntsman stopped at the shop of an oilman, to whom he offered the honey for sale; and the oilman, agreeing to buy it, opened the water-skin, and emptied from it the honey in order to see it. But there dropped from the skin a drop of honey, and a bird pounced down upon it; it alighted upon the honey, and it flung upon the bird; and the huntsman’s dog saw it and sprang upon the cat and killed it; and the oilman sprang upon the dog and killed him; and the huntsman roused up the oilman and killed him; and the oilman was of one village and the huntsman of another, and the people of those two villages took up their weapons and rose against each other in anger; the two men met, and the swords ceased not to be drawn, and they all died a great multitude, the number of whom more noweth but God, whose name be exalted.