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THREE ADDRESSES

TO

GIRLS AT SCHOOL

BY THE

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London

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PREFACE.

The following addresses were printed for private circulation among those to whom they were delivered. But they fell also into other hands; and I have been frequently asked to publish them. I hesitated, on account of the personal and local allusions; but I have found it impossible to remove these allusions, and I have therefore reprinted the addresses in their original form.

J.M.W.

Clifton College,

Sept. 1890.

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I.

EDUCATION.[1]

Now that I have given away the certificates it will be expected that I should make a few remarks on that inexhaustible subject, Education. My remarks will be brief.

I take this opportunity of explaining to our visitors the nature of the Higher Certificate examination. It is an examination instituted originally to test the efficiency of the highest forms of our public schools, and to enable boys to pass the earlier University examinations while still at school. The subjects of study are divided into four groups. In order to obtain a certificate it is necessary to pass in four subjects taken from not less than three groups. A certificate therefore ensures a sound and fairly wide education. The subjects of the groups are languages, mathematics, English history, and lastly science. One concession is made to girls which is not made to boys. They are allowed to pass in two subjects one year, and two others the next, and thus obtain their certificates piecemeal. Boys have to pass in all four subjects the same year. The High School sent in seventeen candidates for the examination in two or three of the subjects—History, Elementary Mathematics, French, German, and Latin,—and fifteen of these passed in two subjects at least: and, inasmuch as seven of them had in a previous year passed in two other subjects, they obtained their certificates. The rest carry on their two subjects, and will, we hope, obtain their certificates next summer; six of them appear to be still in the school. This is a very satisfactory result. The value of these certificates to the public is the testimony they give to the very high efficiency of the teaching. These examinations are not of the standard of the Junior or Senior Local Examinations. They are very much harder. And all who know about these matters see at a glance that a school that ventures to send in its girls for this examination only is aiming very high. The certificates for Music, given by the Harrow Music School examiners, are also recognised by the profession as having a considerable value. But on this subject I cannot speak with the same knowledge.

The value of these examinations to the mistresses is that they serve as a guide and standard for teaching. We are all of us the better for being thus kept up to the mark. Their value to you is that they help to make your work definite and sound: and that, if it is slipshod, you shall at any rate know that it is slipshod.

Therefore, speaking for the Council, and as the parent of a High School girl, and as one of the public, I may say that we set a very high value on these examinations and their results. They test and prove absolute merit. Now, you may have noticed that one of the characteristics of this school is the absence of all prizes and personal competitions within the school itself; all that only brings out the relative merit of individuals. I dare say you have wondered why this should be so, and perhaps grumbled a little. "Other girls," you say, "bring home prizes: our brothers bring home prizes; or at any rate have the chance of doing so—why don't we?" And not only you, but some friends of the school who would like to give prizes—for it is a great pleasure to give prizes—

have sometimes wondered why Miss Woods says "No." I will tell you why. Miss Woods holds—and I believe she is quite right—that to introduce the element of competition, while it would certainly stimulate the clever and industrious to more work, would also certainly tend to obscure and weaken the real motives for work in all, which ought to outlive, but do not always outlive, the age at which prizes are won.

Intelligent industry, without the inducement of prizes, is a far more precious and far more [Pg 4] durable habit than industry stimulated by incessant competition. Teaching and learning are alike the better for the absence of this element, when possible. I consider this to be one of the most striking characteristics of our High School, and one of which you ought to be most proud. It is a distinction of this school. And when you speak of it, as you well may do, with some pride, you will not forget that it is due entirely to the genius and character of your Head-mistress. I believe that one result will be, that you will be the more certain to continue to educate yourselves, and not to imagine that education is over when you leave school.

Is it necessary to say anything to you about the value of education? I think it is; because so many of the processes of education seem at the time to be drudgery, that any glimpses and reminders of the noble results attained by all this drudgery are cheering and encouraging. The reason why it is worth your while to get the best possible education you can, to continue it as long as you can, [Pg 5] to make the very most of it by using all your intelligence and industry and vivacity, and by resolving to enjoy every detail of it, and indeed of all your school life, is that it will make you—*you yourself*—so much more of a person. More—as being more pleasant to others, more useful to others, in an ever-widening sphere of influence, but also more as attaining a higher development of your own nature.

Let us look at two or three ways in which, as you may easily see, education helps to do some of these things.

Education increases your interest in everything; in art, in history, in politics, in literature, in novels, in scenery, in character, in travel, in your relation to friends, to servants, to everybody. And it is *interest* in these things that is the never-failing charm in a companion. Who could bear to live with a thoroughly uneducated woman?—a country milkmaid, for instance, or an uneducated milliner's girl. She would bore one to death in a week. Now, just so far as girls of [Pg 6] your class approach to the type of the milkmaid or the milliner, so far they are sure to be eventually mere gossips and bores to friends, family, and acquaintance, in spite of amiabilities of all sorts. Many-sided and ever-growing interests, a life and aims capable of expansion—the fruits of a trained and active mind—are the durable charms and wholesome influences in all society. These are among the results of a really liberal education. Education does something to overcome the prejudices of mere ignorance. Of all sorts of massive, impenetrable obstacles, the most hopeless and immovable is the prejudice of a thoroughly ignorant and narrow-minded woman of a certain social position. It forms a solid wall which bars all progress. Argument, authority, proof, experience avail nought. And remember, that the prejudices of ignorance are responsible for far more evils in this world than ill-nature or even vice. Ill-nature and vice are not very common, at [Pg 7] any rate in the rank of ladies; they are discountenanced by society; but the prejudices of ignorance—I am sure you wish me to tell you the truth—these are not rare.

Think, moreover, for a moment how much the cultivated intelligence of a few does to render the society in which we move more enjoyable: how it converts "the random and officious sociabilities of society" into a quickening and enjoyable intercourse and stimulus: everybody can recall instances of such a happy result of education. This can only be done by educated women. How much more might be done if there were more of them!

And think, too, how enormously a great increase of trained intelligence in our own class—among such as you will be in a few years—would increase the power of dealing with great social questions. All sorts of work is brought to a standstill for want of trained intelligence. It is not good will, it is not enthusiasm, it is not money that is wanted for all sorts of work; it is good [Pg 8] sense, trained intelligence, cultivated minds. Some rather difficult piece of work has to be done; and one runs over in one's mind who could be found to do it. One after another is given up. One lacks the ability—another the steadiness—another the training—another the mind awakened to see the need: and so the work is not done. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." A really liberal education, and the influence at school of cultivated and vigorous minds, is the cure for this.

Again, you will do little good in the world unless you have wide and strong sympathies: wide—so as to embrace many different types of character; strong—so as to outlast minor rebuffs and failures. Now understanding is the first step to sympathy, and therefore education widens and strengthens our sympathies: it delivers us from ignorant prepossessions, and in this way alone it doubles our powers, and fits us for far greater varieties of life, and for the unknown demands that the future may make upon us. [Pg 9]

I spoke of the narrowness and immovability of ignorance. There is another narrowness which is not due to ignorance so much as to persistent exclusiveness in the range of ideas admitted. Fight against this with all your might. The tendency of all uneducated people is to view each thing as it is by itself, each part without reference to the whole; and then increased knowledge of that part does little more than intensify the narrowness. Education—liberal education—and the association with many and active types of mind, among people of your own age, as well as your teachers, is the only cure for this. Try to understand other people's point of view. Don't think that you and a select few have a monopoly of all truth and wisdom. "It takes all sorts to make a world," and you must understand "all sorts" if you would understand the world and help it.

You are living in a great age, when changes of many kinds are in progress in our political and social and religious ideas. There never was a greater need of trained intelligence, clear heads, [Pg 10] and earnest hearts. And the part that women play is not a subordinate one. They act directly, and still more indirectly. The best men that have ever lived have traced their high ideals to the influence of noble women as mothers or sisters or wives. No man who is engaged in the serious work of the world, in the effort to purify public opinion and direct it aright, but is helped or hindered by the women of his household. Few men can stand the depressing and degrading influence of the uninterested and placid amiability of women incapable of the true public spirit, incapable of a generous or noble aim—whose whole sphere of ideas is petty and personal. It is not only that such women do nothing themselves—they slowly asphyxiate their friends, their brothers, or their husbands. These are the unawakened women; and education may deliver you from this dreadful fate, which is commoner than you think.

In no respect is the influence of women more important than in religion. Much might be said of [Pg 11] the obstacles placed in the way of religious progress by the crude and dogmatic prepossessions of ignorant women, who will rush in with confident assertion where angels might fear to tread: but this is neither the time nor the place for such remarks. It is enough to remind you that in no part of your life do you more need the width and modesty and courage of thought, and the delicacy of insight given by culture, than when you are facing the grave religious questions of the day, either for yourself or others.

But let me turn to a somewhat less serious subject. We earnestly desire that women should be highly educated. And yet is there not a type of educated woman which we do not wholly admire? I am not going to caricature a bluestocking, but to point out one or two real dangers. Education is good; but perfect sanity is better still. Sanity is the most excellent of all women's excellences. We forgive eccentricity and one-sidedness—the want of perfect sanity—in men, and especially men of [Pg 12] genius; and we rather reluctantly forgive it in women of genius; but in ordinary folk, no. These are the strong-minded women; ordinary folk, who make a vigorous protest against one or two of the minor mistakes of society, instead of lifting the whole: I should call these, women of imperfect sanity. It is a small matter that you should protest against some small maladjustment or folly; but it is a great matter that you should be perfectly sane and well-balanced. Now education helps sanity. It shows the proportion of things. An American essayist bids us "keep our eyes on the fixed stars." Education helps us to do this. It helps us to live the life we have to lead on a higher mental and spiritual level it glorifies the actual.

And now, seeing these things are so, what ought to be the attitude of educated girls and women towards pleasures, the usual pleasures of society? Certainly not the cynical one—"Life would be tolerable if it were not for its pleasures." Pleasures do make up, and ought to make up, a [Pg 13] considerable portion of life. Now I have no time for an essay on pleasures. I will only offer two remarks. One is that the pleasure open to all cultivated women, even in the pleasures that please them least, is the pleasure of giving pleasure. Go to give pleasure, not to get it, and that converts anything into a pleasure. The other remark is, Pitch your ordinary level of life on so quiet a note that simple things shall not fail to please. If home, and children, and games, and the daily routine of life—if the sight of October woods and the Severn sea, and of human happy faces fail to please, then either in fact or in imagination you are drugging yourself with some strong drink of excitement, and spoiling the natural healthy appetite for simple pleasures. This is one of the dangers of educated women: but it is their danger because they are imperfectly educated: educated on one side, that of books; and not on the other and greater side, of wide human sympathies. Society seems to burden and narrow and dull the uneducated woman, but it also [Pg 14] hardens and dulls a certain sort of educated woman too, one who refuses her sympathies to the pleasures of life. But to the fuller nature, society brings width and fresh clearness. It gives the larger heart and the readier sympathy, and the wider the sphere the more does such a nature expand to fill it.

What I am now saying amounts to this, that an educated intelligence is good, but an educated sympathy is better. I recall certain lines written by the late Lord Carlisle on being told that a lady was plain and commonplace:—

"You say that my love is plain,
  But that I can never allow,
When I look at the thought for others
  That is written on her brow.

"The eyes are not fine, I own,
  She has not a well-cut nose,
But a smile for others' pleasure
  And a sigh for others' woes.

"Quick to perceive a want,
  Quicker to set it right,
Quickest in overlooking
  Injury, wrong, or slight.

[Pg 15]

"Hark to her words to the sick,
  Look at her patient ways,

Every word she utters
Speaks to the speaker's praise.

"Purity, truth, and love,
Are they such common things?
If hers were a common nature
Women would all have wings.

"Talent she may not have,
Beauty, nor wit, nor grace,
But until she's among the angels
She cannot be commonplace."

There is something to remember: cultivate sympathy, gentleness, forgiveness, purity, truth, love: and then, though you may have no other gifts, "until you're among the angels, you cannot be commonplace."

And here I might conclude. But I should not satisfy myself or you, if I did so without paying my tribute of genuine commendation to the High School, and of hearty respect for the Head-mistress and her staff of teachers. Clifton owes Miss Woods a great debt for the tone of high-mindedness and loyalty, for the moral and intellectual stamp that she has set on the School. She has won, as we all know, the sincere respect and attachment of her mistresses and her old pupils; and the older and wiser you grow the more you all will learn to honour and love her. And you will please her best by thorough loyalty to the highest aims of the School which she puts before you by her words and by her example.

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[1] An Address given at the High School, Clifton, Oct. 25, 1887.

II.

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR GIRLS.[2]

It is a real pleasure to find myself in Bath on an educational mission. I have ancestral and personal educational connections with Bath of very old standing. My father was curate of St. Michael's before I was born; my grandfather and uncle were in succession head-masters of the Grammar School here, fine scholars both, of the old school. My first visit to Bath was when I was nine years old, and on that occasion I had my first real stand-up fight with a small Bath Grammar School boy. I think that if the old house is still standing I could find the place where we fought, and where a master brutally interrupted us with a walking-stick. Since those days, my relations with Bath have been rare, but peaceful; unless, indeed, the honourable competition between Clifton College and its brilliant daughter, Bath College, may be regarded as a ceaseless but a friendly combat between their two head-masters whom you see so peaceably side by side.

I propose, first, to say a few words about the condition of schools twenty years ago, before the present impulse towards the higher education of women gave us High Schools and Colleges at the Universities, and other educational movements. There is a most interesting chapter in the report of the Endowed Schools Commission of 1868 on girls' schools, and some valuable evidence collected by the Assistant Commissioners. It is not ancient history yet, and therein lies its great value to us. It shows us the evils from which we are only now escaping in our High Schools: evils which still prevail to a formidable extent in a large section of girls' education, and from which I can scarcely imagine Bath is wholly free.

The report speaks of the general indifference of parents to the education of their girls in our whole upper and middle class, both absolutely and relatively to that of their boys. That indifference in part remains. There was a strong prejudice that girls could not learn the same subjects as boys, and that even if they could, such an education was useless and even injurious. That prejudice still survives, in face of facts.

The right education, it was thought, for girls, was one of accomplishments and of routine work, with conversational knowledge of French. The ideal of a girl's character was that she was to be merely amiable, ready to please and be pleased; it was, as was somewhat severely said by one of the Assistant Commissioners, not to be good and useful when married, but to *get* married. There was no ideal for single women. They did not realize how much of the work of the world must go undone unless there is a large class of highly educated single women. This view of girls' education is not yet extinct.

Corresponding to the ideal on the part of the ordinary British parent was, of course, the school itself. There was no high ideal of physical health, and but little belief that it depended on physical conditions; therefore the schools were neither large and airy, nor well provided with recreation ground; not games and play, but an operation known as "crocodiling" formed the daily and wearisome exercise of girls. That defect also is common still. There was no ideal of art, or belief in the effect of artistic surroundings, and therefore the schools were unpretending even to ugliness and meanness. The walls were not beautified with pictures, nor were the rooms furnished with taste. There was no high ideal of cultivating the intelligence, and therefore most of the lessons that were not devoted to accomplishments, such as music, flower-painting, fancy work, hand-screen making, etc., were given to memory work, and note-books, in which extracts [Pg 20] were made from standard authors and specimen sums worked with flourishes wondrous to behold. The serious study of literature and history was almost unknown. The memory work consisted in many schools in learning Mangnall's Questions and Brewer's Guide to Science—fearful books. The first was miscellaneous: What is lightning? How is sago made? What were the Sicilian Vespers, the properties of the atmosphere, the length of the Mississippi, and the Pelagian heresy? These are, I believe, actual specimens of the questions; and the answers were committed to memory. About twenty-five years ago I examined some girls in Brewer's Guide to Science. The verbal knowledge of some of them was quite wonderful; their understanding of the subject absolutely *nil*. They could rattle off all about positive and negative electricity, and Leyden jars and batteries; but the words obviously conveyed no ideas whatever, and they cheerfully talked utter nonsense in answer to questions not in the book. [Pg 21]

Examinations for schools were not yet instituted; the education was unguided, and therefore largely misguided. Do not let us imagine for an instant that these evils have been generally cured. The secondary education of the country is still in a deplorable condition; and it behoves us to repeat on all occasions that it is so. The schools I am describing from the report of twenty years ago exist and abound and flourish still, owing to the widespread indifference of parents to the education of their girls, to the qualifications and training of their mistresses, and the efficiency of the schools. Untested, unguided, they exist and even thrive, and will do so until a sounder public opinion and the proved superiority of well-trained mistresses and well-educated girls gradually exterminates the inefficient schools. But we are, I fear, a long way still from this desirable consummation.

What were the mistresses? For the most part worthy, even excellent ladies, who had no other [Pg 22] means of livelihood, and who had no special education themselves, and no training whatever. Naturally they taught what they could, and laid stress on what was called the *formation of character*, which they usually regarded as somehow alternative with intellectual attainments and stimulus, and progress in which could not be submitted to obvious tests.

I suppose most of us think that there is no more valuable assistance in the formation of character than any pursuit that leads the mind away from frivolous pursuits, egotistic or morbid fancies, and fills it with memories of noble words and lives, teaches it to love our great poets and writers, and gives it sympathies with great causes. But this was not the prevailing opinion twenty years ago. The influence of good people, good homes, good example—in a word truly religious influence, as we shall all admit—is the strongest element in the formation of character; but the next strongest is assuredly that education which teaches us to admire "whatsoever things are [Pg 23] true, whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report;" and this ought to be, and is, one of the results of the literary teaching given by well-educated mistresses.

I have been describing the common type of what used to be called the "seminaries" and "establishments for young ladies" of twenty years ago. And it may give you the impression that there was no good education to be got in those days, and that the ladies of my generation were therefore very ill-educated. Permit me to correct that impression. There were homes in which the girls learned something from father or from mother, or, perhaps, something from a not very talented governess; but in which they educated themselves with a hunger and thirst after knowledge, and an enjoyment of literature that is rare in any school. Do not imagine that any school education under mistresses however skilled, or resulting in certificates however brilliant, is really as effective in the formation of strong intellectual tastes and clear judgment and ability [Pg 24] as the self-education which was won by the mothers of some of you, by the women of my generation and those before. Such education was rare, but it was possible, and it is possible still. Under such a system a few are educated and the many fail altogether. The advantage of our day is that education is offered to a much larger number. But I cannot call it better than that which was won by a few in the generation of your mothers. If we would combine the exceptional merits of the old system with the high average merits of the new we must jealously preserve the element of freedom and self-education.

To return to the report. The indifference of parents and the public, the inadequacy of school buildings and appliances, the low intellectual ideals of mistresses, were the evils of twenty years ago, prevailing very widely and lowering school education, and we must not expect to have got rid of them altogether. An educational atmosphere is not changed in twenty years. [Pg 25]

But our High Schools are a very real step in advance. The numbers of your school show that there is a considerable and increasing fraction of residents in Bath who do care for the intellectual quality of the education of their girls; and the report of the examiners is a most satisfactory guarantee that the instruction given here is thoroughly efficient along the whole line. Bath must be congratulated on its High School for Girls, as it must be congratulated on its College for Boys.

But are we therefore to rest and be thankful in the complacent belief that we have now at length attained perfection, at least in our High Schools? I am called in to bless High School education, and I do bless it from my heart. I know something of it. My own daughter was at such a school; I have been vice-president of a High School for ten years. I wish there were High Schools in every town in England. They have done and are doing much to lift the standard of girls' education in [Pg 26] England. But I will again remind you that High Schools are educating but a fraction of the population, and that the faults of twenty years ago still characterise our girls' education as a whole.

And now, having said this, I shall not be misunderstood if I go on to speak of some of the deficiencies in our ideals of girls' education which seem to me to affect High Schools as well as all other schools. One point, in which the older education with its manifold defects had a real merit, is that there was no over-teaching, no hurry to produce results, and therefore no disgust aroused with learning and literature. At any rate, the girls, or the best of them, left school or governess "with an appetite." Now I consider this is a real test of teaching at school or college, in science or literature: does it leave boys and girls hungry for more, with such a love for learning that they will go on studying of themselves? If the teaching of some science is such that you never want to go to another science lecture as long as you live: your lessons on literature such [Pg 27] that your Shakespeare, your Spenser, your Burke, your Browning will never again descend from your shelves: then, whatever else schools may have done, they have sacrificed the future to the present. It is on this account that the pressure of external examinations and its effect on the teaching of mistresses must be most carefully watched. To get immediate results is easy, but it is sometimes at the cost of later results. Our aim should be not so much to teach, as to make our pupils love to learn, and have methods of learning; and every teacher should remember that our pupils can learn far more than we can teach them; and, as Thring used to say, "hammering is not teaching." With a system of competitive examinations for the Army and Civil Service, boys must sometimes sacrifice the future to the present. Girls need never do so, and therefore girls' schools need not copy the faults as well as the excellences of boys' schools. [Pg 28]

I have ventured to say so much for an intellectual danger in High Schools. I do not doubt that your head-mistress is aware of it, and on her guard: I speak much more to the public, to the parents, and to the Council (if I may say so), as an expert, because I know that the public sometimes want to be satisfied that the education is good at every stage, and they ought to be content if it is good at the final stage. Another point on which I would venture to say a word to parents is this. Do not take your girls away from school too early. Every schoolmaster knows that the most valuable years, those which leave the deepest marks in character and intellect, are those from sixteen to eighteen. It is equally true with girls, as schoolmistresses know equally well. It is in the later years that they get the full benefit of the higher teaching, and that much of what may have seemed the drudgery of earlier work reaps its natural and deserved reward. Let your children come early, so as to be taught well from the beginning, and let them stay late. [Pg 29]

I do not myself know what your buildings may be; but a friend to whom I wrote speaks of them as inadequate and somewhat unworthy of the city. May I venture to say to a Bath public that it is worth while to have first-rate buildings for educational purposes? No money is better spent. If the Bath public will take this up in earnest it cannot be doubted that the Girls' School Company would second their efforts in such an important centre. Come over and see our Clifton High School, with its spacious lawns and playgrounds and pleasant rooms, and you will be discontented with a righteous discontent.

And now I will point out another defect in High School education which parents and mistresses may do much to remedy. There is usually—and I am assuming without direct knowledge that it is the case here—no system by which any one girl is known through her whole school career to any one mistress; nothing corresponding to the tutor system of our public schools. It follows that a girl passes from form to form, and the relation between her and her mistress is so constantly [Pg 30] broken that it is morally less powerful than it might be. The friendly and permanent relation of old days is converted into an official and temporary relation. It will be obvious to any one who reflects that the loss is great. The cure for it is twofold. The parents may do much by establishing a friendly relation with the form mistresses of their girls. I have known parents who had never taken the trouble to inquire even the names of their girls' mistress. If parents wish to get really the best out of a school, I would say to them (and I am speaking specially to mothers), you are delegating to the form mistress a very large share of the responsibility for the formation of your daughter's character; the least you can do is to be in the most friendly and confidential communication with her that circumstances permit. And I would say to the mistresses that, as far as is possible, you should be to the girls what form masters are in a good school to their boys—friends in school and out of school, acquainted with their tastes, companions sometimes in their [Pg 31] games or their walks, and in all ways breaking down the merely formal relation of teacher and pupil. The ideally bad master, as I have often said to my young masters on a first appointment, is one who as soon as his boys clear out of the class-room, puts his hands in his pockets and whistles, and thanks Heaven that he will see no more of the boys for so many hours. I do not know what the corresponding action on the part of a mistress may be, as I believe they have no pockets and can't whistle, but there is probably a corresponding state of mind. I venture, therefore, to suggest that in our High Schools there should be a greater *rapprochement* than is usual between parents and mistresses and girls in order to make the system more truly educational in the best sense.

I am now going to turn to a wholly different subject; and I am going to talk to the girls. In the crusade against the lower type of education that prevailed twenty years ago, and still exists, who [Pg 32] are the most important agents? It is the girls who are still in the High Schools, or who are passing out of them, or who are otherwise getting the higher education in a few private schools.

"Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men," and read of all women too, with their still keener eyes.

There is a very real danger in our High Schools that the intellectual side of education may be overestimated and overpressed, not by mistresses, but by yourselves; and that the natural, human, domestic, and family elements in it may be undervalued. What are you yourselves at home, in society, with parents, brothers, sisters, children, friends, schoolfellows, servants? Is the better education, that you are undoubtedly getting, widening your sympathies, opening your heart and mind to all the educational influences which do not consist in books or in work? Is it giving you greater delicacy of touch? Is it opening new channels for influences, streaming in on you or streaming out from you? Your daily life may become a higher education, and is so to the [Pg 33] truly noble-minded and well-educated girl or woman. Do not regard as interruptions, and as teasing, the calls of household, the duties to parents, visitors, children, and the rest; it is part of the education of life to fulfil all these duties well, delightfully, brilliantly, joyously, enthusiastically; these things are not interruptions to life, they are life itself. There was a pitiful magazine article written the other day by some lady complaining that social duties, the having to see her friends, her cook, her gardener, her dress-maker, etc., prevented her from reading Herbert Spencer, and developing her small fragment of soul. Social duties, rightly done, are one of the developments of soul. Let it be seen that you girls who can enjoy your literature, and your history, and your music, and your drawing with keen appreciation are not made thereby selfish or unsociable; but that you are more delightful creatures than those who have no such independent resources and joys. A girl who gets her certificate or prize and is cross or dull at home, and does [Pg 34] not think it worth while to be kind and agreeable to a young brother or an old nurse, to every creature in her household down to the cat and the canary, is a traitor to the cause of higher education.

Again, it has been observed that the practical and artistic elements in school education have been, in general, more thoroughly developed of late years since they were put into a secondary place. This is as it should be. Such subjects as music, drawing, cooking, housekeeping, wood-carving, nursing, needlework, when they are studied at all, are studied more professionally and thoroughly and intelligently, and less in the spirit of the amateur and dabbler. So I would say to you, both now and when you leave, show that your education in intelligence has given you wide interests and powers to master all such subjects. Take them up all the more thoroughly.

Closely akin to this merit of thoroughness is the large spirit of unselfishness that ought to come, [Pg 35] and certainly in many instances does come, with wider interests, a more intelligent education, and a more active imagination. Women in our class have more leisure than men; they can actually do what is impossible by the conditions of life for us men to do, link class to class by knowledge and sympathy and help and kindness. They can be of immense service in this way. There is a story in the life of an American lady, Mrs. Lynam, that occurs to me. There was much conversation about a certain Mr. Robbins, who had lately died; he had been such a benefactor, such a good man, and so on. A visitor asked, "Did Mr. Robbins found a benevolent institution?" "No," was the reply, "he *was* a benevolent institution." Women of our class may be, they ought to be, "benevolent institutions." And such women exist among us; pity is there are so few of them. They can unobtrusively be centres of happiness, and knowledge, and generous attitudes of mind. [Pg 36] Now there ought to be more of such women, and I look to our High Schools with hope. They ought to make girls public-spirited and large-minded.

There is another element in girls' education which is only imperfectly as yet brought out, and which you yourselves can do something to develop. I mean the better appreciation of an education which is not in books, and not in accomplishments, and not in duties, and not in social intercourse. How shall I describe it? Think of the old Greek education of men. There was a large element of literature and poetry and natural religion and imagination in it; and a large element of gymnastic also; but besides all this it was an education of eye and ear; it was a training that sprang from reverence for nature, as a whole, for an ideal of complete life, in body and mind and soul; and not only for complete individual life, but also for the city, the nation. It was a consummate perfection of life that was ever leading the Athenian upward, by a life-long education, to strive for a certain grace and finish in every one of his faculties. And we see to what [Pg 37] splendid results in literature and art and civic and personal beauty it led them.

This element is still wanting in our higher education; it is the ideal of nobility of life and perfection. We lack it in our physical education. That is still far from perfect. If we all, parents, children, boys and girls, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, had some of the Greek feeling of high admiration of physical perfection of form and grace and activity, we should not see so many boys and girls of very imperfect gracefulness, nor should we see fashions of dress so ruinous to all ideals of perfection and grace. We cannot make up for the want of this national artistic ideal of beauty of figure by artificial gymnastics, scientific posturings, and ladders and bars. They are better than nothing, they are a protest, they certainly remedy some defects and prevent others. But do not you be content with them. By self-respect and self-discipline, by healthy life, early hours, open air, natural exercise, the joyous and free use of all your powers, by dancing, playing [Pg 38] games, by refusal to give way to unhealthy and disfiguring fashions, and, above all, by an aspiration after grace and perfection, do what you can to remedy this national defect in our ideals for girls.

Did you ever read Kingsley's "Nausicaa in London"? Do you all know who Nausicaa was? If not, let me advise you to borrow Worsley's "Odyssey" and read Book VI., and read Kingsley's Essay too. Nausicaa was a Greek maiden who played at ball; and I think you are doing more to approach the old Greek ideal when you play at lawn tennis and cricket and hockey, and I would add rounders and many another game, than when you are going through ordered exercises, valuable as they are, or even than when you are learning Greek or copying Greek statues.

This leads me to say that games contribute much to remedy another deficiency in our ideal. There is a defective power of real enjoyment of life, of healthy spirits among us moderns. There is [Pg 39] more enjoyment now than there was. I think my generation was better than the one that preceded us in this respect; we had more games, more fun, more *abandon* in enjoyment than our fathers and mothers, your grandfathers and grandmothers, had, if we may judge from letters published and unpublished. And they too often thought we were a frivolous generation, not so staid and decorous as we might be, and repressed and checked us; while we on the contrary urge on you to enjoy more fully the splendour of your youth and vitality. We desire to see you dance and sing and laugh and bubble over with the delicious inexhaustible flow of vital energy; we know that it need not interfere with the refinement of perfect manners and decorum, and we know too that there is the force which will sober down and do good work, and there is the health-giving exercise, the geniality, and the joy that will make you stronger and pleasanter, more patient and more persuasive to good in years to come. So it is with boys: men are made in our playgrounds as [Pg 40] much as in the class-room; so, too, is it with you. I must give you a quotation from "Fo'c's'le Yarns," that delightfullest of volumes—

> "It's likely God has got a plan
> To put a spirit in a man
> That's more than you can stow away
> In the heart of a child. But he'll see the day
> When he'll not have a bit too much for the work
> He's got to do. And the little Turk
> Is good for nothing but shouting and fighting
> And carrying on; and God delighting
> To make him strong and bold and free
> And thinking the man he's going to be—
> More beef than butter, more lean than lard,
> Hard if you like, but the world is hard.
> You'll see a river how it dances
> From rock to rock wherever it chances:
> In and out, and here and there
> A regular young divil-may-care.
> But, caught in the sluice, it's another case,
> And it steadies down, and it flushes the race
> Very deep and strong, but still
> It's not too much to work the mill.
> The same with hosses: kick and bite
> And winch away—all right, all right,
> Wait a bit and give him his ground,
> And he'll win his rider a thousand pound."

There is a word in German which has no English equivalent; it expresses just the missing ideal I [Pg 41] am speaking of. It is a terrible mouthful, as German words often are—Lebensglückseligkeit—it is the rapture and blessedness and happiness of living. Carry the idea away with you, and make it one of your personal ideals, and home ideals, and school ideals, and life ideals, this Lebensglückseligkeit.

> "'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh life, not death, for which we pant;
> More life, and fuller, that I want."

You can carry this idea with you into society, and use it to brighten its conventional sociabilities, and stimulate them into positive enjoyability by more of intelligence and animation.

We had a visit the other day from an American gentleman, Mr. Muybridge, who came to give a lecture at Clifton College. I believe he also lectured in Bath. He remarked to Mrs. Wilson in the lecture-room that he was glad to see some ladies present. "I like ladies at my lectures; they are so intelligent." "Yes," she replied, "but I fear you are attributing to us the qualities of American [Pg 42] ladies; we are not particularly intelligent." "You are joking!" was his reply. "No," she went on, "we are always told how much more intelligent American ladies are than English." He paused for some time, and then slowly said, "Well, I'll not deny they are smarter."

Well, this quality that Mr. Muybridge describes as "smartness" is an American equivalent of Lebensglückseligkeit; it is a sort of intensity of life, of vivacity, of willingness to take trouble, to interest and be interested, that is a little lacking in our English ideal of young ladies: and we must be on our guard lest any school ideals of study and bookishness should actually increase this deficiency. Any one, mistress or girl, who makes good education to be associated with dulness and boredom and insipidity is again a traitor to the cause of higher education.

I have run to greater length than I intended, and I will conclude. [Pg 43]

It should be the aim of us all, Council, parents, mistresses, and girls, to show that our ideal of education includes both the training of the intelligence and reason, and the storing the mind with treasures of beauty and instruments of power for opening new avenues into the storehouse of knowledge and delight that the world contains; and also the development of the practical ability, the benevolence and sympathy, the vivacity, the enjoyment of life, the fulness of activity, bodily and mental, that makes the Lebensglückseligkeit I spoke of, and the superadding, or rather diffusing through it all, an unobtrusive but deep Christian faith and reverence and charity.

The Archbishop of Canterbury lately said in his charge that "public schools were infinitely more conducive to a strong morality than any other institution." He was thinking of boys' schools, of which he speaks with intimate knowledge; but I believe that, where girls' schools have at their [Pg 44] head one who in the spirit of Dr. Arnold recognizes the responsibility for giving an unostentatious, unpartisan-like, but all-pervading and intelligent religious tone to the life, the aims, and the ideal of the school, and where the Council and parents value this influence, there the influence of girls' High Schools may be more conducive to strong morality and true religion in England than even that of our great public schools. For the High Schools are training more and more of the most influential class among the women of England, as the public schools are training the men, and the influence of women must of necessity be of the first importance; for it is they who determine the religious training and the atmosphere of the home, and thus profoundly affect the national character. Let us all alike try to keep before ourselves from day to day and from year to year these high ideals of education which can nowhere be so well attained, both by mistresses and girls, as in a High School. [Pg 45]

And in particular let me appeal to you, the inhabitants of Bath, to be proud of this school, to foster it, to assist it in every way, and be assured that in so doing you are conferring a lasting benefit on your famous city.>

[2] An Address delivered at the High School, Bath, and the High School, Clifton, Dec. 1889.

III.

RELIGION.[3]

I am not going to preach you a sermon of quite the usual type, but intend rather to offer a few detached remarks without attempting to weave them into any unity of plan, or to connect them with any particular text from the Bible. Such unity as these remarks may possess will result not from design but from the nature of the subject. For I am going to speak about religion.

Now as I write this word I almost fancy I hear the rustle of an audience composing itself to endure what it foresees must be a dull and uninteresting address. "Religion! he can't make that interesting." Now, why is this? What is religion, that in the eyes of so many clever and intelligent [Pg 46] and well-educated young people it should be thought dull?

Of this one point I am quite sure, that it is the fault of our misunderstanding and misrepresentation, in the past and the present, that religion seems dull.

Religion is, in its essence, the opening to the young mind of all the higher regions of thought and aspiration and imagination and spirituality. When you are quite young you are occupied of course with the visible things and people round you; each hour brings its amusements, its occupations and its delights, and reflection scarcely begins. But soon questions of right and wrong spring up; a world of ideas and imaginations opens before you; you are led by your teachers and your books into the presence of great thoughts, the inspirations that come from beauty in all forms, from nature, from art, from literature, and especially from poets; you come under the influence of friends—fathers, mothers, or other elders—who evidently have springs of conduct and aspirations [Pg 47] you as yet only dimly recognize; and mixed with all these influences there is that influence on us from childhood upward of our prayers that we have been taught, our religious services, our Bibles, and most of all the Sacred Figure, dimly seen, but never long absent from our thoughts, enveloped in a sort of sacred and mysterious halo—the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ enshrined in our hearts, and that Father in Heaven of Whom He spoke. All these are among the religious influences; and what is their aim and object? What is it that we should try and extract from them for ourselves? How should we use them in our turn to better those who come after us?

Well, I reply, they should all be regarded as the avenues by which our human nature as a whole ought to rise, and the only avenues by which it can rise, to its rightful and splendid heritage and its true development. We cannot be all that we might be without straining our efforts in this direction of aspiration towards God, towards all that is ideal, spiritual and divine. [Pg 48]

We are often inert, effortless, and then the religion I have spoken of repels us because it demands an effort; we are often selfish, and it repels us because it calls us out of self; we are often absorbed in the small and immediate aims for present enjoyment, interested in our own small circles, and religion insists that these are not enough. It is for ever calling us, as all true education calls us, as literature and history call us, to rise higher, to see more, to widen our sympathies, to enlarge our hearts, to open the doors of feeling and emotion. Religion therefore may make great demands on us; it may disturb our repose; it may shake us, and say, look, look;

look up, look round; it may be importunate, insistent, omnipresent, but it is not dull.

There is a sham semblance of religion which you are right in regarding as dull, for it is dull. When it is unreal and insincere it is deadly dull; when phrases are repeated, parrotwise, by [Pg 49] people who have either never felt or have long lost their power and inspiration, then too it is deadly dull. When a sharp line, moreover, is made between all the various influences that elevate us, and place us in presence of the ideal and spiritual world; when the common relations of life, when art, poetry, criticism, science; when educated and refining intercourse and conversation, and all that occupies us on our intellectual sides is classed as secular, and the only helps to religion that are recognized are services and creeds and traditions of our particular church, then such religion cuts itself off from many of its springs, and from most of its fairest fields, and *is* barren, and unprofitable, and dull.

You are not likely to make this error. You are perhaps more likely to make the opposite error, by a natural reaction from this. Because, when all the world of interest and beauty and human life is opening before you, you cannot believe that religion is confined to the narrow sphere of ideas in [Pg 50] which it was once thought to consist, and is still sometimes declared to consist, you may think that you can dispense with that narrow but central sphere of ideas; and there you are wrong. I am quite sure that there is no inspiring and sustaining force, which shall make your lives worthy, comparable to the faith which Christ taught the world, that we are verily the children of God, and sharers of His Divine life, heirs of an eternal life in Christ towards which we may press, and the appointed path to which lies in the highest duties that our daily life presents and consecrates. On this inspiring power of faith in Christ I shall not speak to-day. I mean to speak on one only of the duties which form the path to the higher life, which you may overlook, and yet which is inherent in religion.

The duty which I shall speak of is the necessity of entering into the life and needs and sympathies of others; of living not with an eye exclusively on yourself, but with the constant thought for others. It is the law of our being that admits of no exception. You may hope that the law of [Pg 51] gravitation will be suspended in your case, and leap out of the window; but you will suffer for your mistake; and you will be equally mistaken and equally maim your life, if you think that somehow the law of the spiritual world would admit of exception, and that you can win happiness, goodness, and the full tide of life; become the best that you are capable of being, while remaining isolated, self-absorbed—by being centripetal, not centrifugal. It cannot be. Now this is worth saying to you, because you know here at school what a united social life is. All girls do not know this. You do. There is distinctly here a school life, a school feeling, a house feeling. No casual visitor to your playing fields and hall can mistake this. And you know that this enlarges and draws something out of your nature that would never have been suspected had it not been for school life. But when school life ends, what will become of this discovery that you have made? [Pg 52] Boys, when they leave school and have developed the passionate feeling of love for their old school,—the strong *esprit de corps*, the conviction that in brotherhood and union is their strength and happiness,—contrive to find fresh united activities, and transfer to new bodies their public spirit and power of co-operation. Their college, their regiment, their football club, their work with young employés, their parish, their town—something is found into which they can throw themselves. And again and again I have watched how this has become a religion, a binding and elevating and educating power in the mind of young men; and again and again, too, I have noticed how without it men lose interest, lose growth and greatness; individualism creeps on them, half their nature is stunted. For the individual life is only half the life; and even that cannot be the rich and full and glorious thing it might be, unless it is enlarged on all sides, and rests on a wide social sympathy and love. [Pg 53]

But how is it for girls when they leave school? It is distinctly harder for you to find lines of united action. Society tends to individualize young ladies; its ideal for them is elegant inaction and graceful waiting, to an extent infinitely beyond what it is for young men. You do not find at your homes ready-made associations to join, or even an obvious possibility of doing anything for anybody. And so I have witnessed generous and fine school-girl natures dwarfed, cabined, confined; cheated of the activities which they had learned to desire to exercise, becoming individualistic, and therefore commonplace; not without inward fury and resistance, secret remonstrance, but concealing it all under the impassive manner which society demands.

Something is wrong: and your generation is finding this out, and finding out also its cure. Year by year greater liberty of action is open to educated women; and educated women are themselves seeing, and others are seeing for them, that they have a part to play in the world which none [Pg 54] others can play; if they do not play it, then work, indispensable to the good of society, and therefore to their own good, is undone. I say to *their own good*, for we all want happiness: but happiness is not won by seeking for it. Make up your minds on this point, that there are certain things only to be got by not aiming directly at them. Aim, for example, at being influential, and you become a prig; aim at walking and posing gracefully, and you become an affected and ludicrous object; aim even at breathing quite regularly, and you fail.

So if you aim at happiness or self-culture or individualistic completeness, the world seems to combine to frustrate you. People, circumstances, opportunities, temper, everything goes wrong; and you lay the blame on everything except the one thing that is the cause of it all, the fact that you yourself are aiming at the wrong thing. But aim at making everything go well where you are; aim at using this treasure of life that God has given you for helping lame dogs over stiles, for [Pg 55] making schools, households, games, parishes, societies, sick-rooms, girls' clubs, what not?—run more smoothly; wake every morning with the thought what can I do to-day to oil the wheels of my little world; and behold people, circumstances, opportunities, temper, even health, all get into a new adjustment, and all combine to fill your life with interests, warmth, affection, culture, and growth: you will find it true: good measure, shaken down, heaped together, and running over, shall men give into your bosoms.

Ah! but *what* can one do? It is so hard to find out the right thing. Yes; and no possible general rule can be given. You must fix the ideal in your mind, and be sure that in some way or other openings will arise. I will not touch life at school; you know more about that than I do, and perhaps need not that I should speak of public spirit, and generous temper, and the united life. I will only say that a girl who does not throw herself into school life with the generous wish to give [Pg 56] pleasure and to lift the tone around her, does not get more than a fraction of the good that a school life like this can give, and does not do her duty. I speak of later years alone. And in the first instance, and always in the first place, stand the claims of home. I dare say you remember the young lady who wanted to go and learn nursing in a hospital, and was asked by the doctor why she desired this. "Father is paralysed," she said, "and mother is nearly blind, and my sisters are all married, and it is so dull at home; so I thought I should like nursing." I don't want you to emulate that young person. Grudge no love and care at home: no one can give such happiness to parents, brothers, sisters, as you can, and to make people happy is in itself a worthy mission; it is the next best thing to making them good. And remember also, that there are many years before you: and that though it may seem that years are spent with nothing effected except that somehow things have gone more smoothly, you yourself will have been matured, deepened, and [Pg 57] consolidated by a life of duty, in a way in which no self-chosen path of life could have trained you. And if, as is quite possible, some of you are impatient already for the exercise of your powers in some great work, I will preach patience to you from another motive. It is this: that you are not yet capable of doing much that is useful, from want of training and general ability. I remember Miss Octavia Hill once saying that she could get any quantity of money, and any quantity of enthusiasm, but that her difficulty was to get trained intelligence, either in men or women. So, a few days ago, Miss Clementina Black, who is Hon. Secretary of the Women's Trade Association, said to a friend of my own that she had had many voluntary lady helpers of various degrees of education and culture, and that she had found without exception that the highly educated students were the most fitted to do the work well; that they alone were capable of the patience, [Pg 58] accuracy, and attention to detail which were one essential quality to the doing of such work, and that they alone could provide the other essentials, which can only spring from a cultivated mind—viz., wideness of view, sense of proportion, and capacity for general interest in other important questions—social, literary, and intellectual. "It is this cultivation of mind which prevents you from being crushed under the difficulty and tedium and disappointment which must attend every effort to teach principles and promote ideal aims among the mass of ignorant, apathetic, uninterested, and helpless working women, who must themselves in the last resort be the agents in bringing about a better condition of industry."

You may rest assured that if you set your mind on a career of splendid usefulness for your fellows (and I hope every one of you here aims at this), then you will need all the training that the highest and most prolonged education can give you. Become the most perfect creature you have it in your power to become. If Oxford or Cambridge are open to you, welcome the opportunity, [Pg 59] and use the extra power they will give you. If not, then utilise the years that lie before you, in perfecting your accomplishments, in self-education; in interesting and informing yourself on social questions, in enlarging your horizon, while you cheerfully, happily, brilliantly perform *all* your home duties.

And during this period of preparation which you all must go through, remember that there are some things which you can do better in your inexperience and ignorance than any other people. How is this? Tell me why it would be more comfort, and do more good sometimes to a poor sick woman to bring her a few primroses or daffodils than to give her any substantial relief. The reason is the same. The very freshness and innocence of young faces, that sympathise without having the faintest suspicion of the sin and misery of the world, is more refreshing and helpful than the stronger sympathy of one who really knows all the evil. You can be primroses and [Pg 60] daffodils, and give glimpses into a purer world of love and gentleness and peace.

And if a prolonged training is impossible to you, it is often possible for you to assist in some humble capacity some lady who is so engaged in work on a scale which you could not yourself touch. Be her handmaid and fag and slave, and so gradually train yourself to become capable of independent action.

But to sum up all I am saying it amounts to this—Where there's a will there's a way, and I want you to have the will.

Did you ever think for what reason you should have had such a splendid time of it in your lives? Not two girls in a thousand are getting such an education as you are, such varied studies, such vigorous public school life, such historic associations. And why? Because you are better than others? I think not. It is that you play your part in the great social organism our national life; hundreds are toiling for us, digging, spinning, weaving, mining, building, navigating, that we may have leisure for the thought, the love, the wisdom that shall lighten and direct their lives. You [Pg 61] cannot dissociate yourselves from the labouring masses, and in particular from the women and girls of England. They are your sisters; and a blight and a curse rests on you if you ignore them, and grasp at all the pleasures and sweetness and cultivation of your life with no thought or toil for them. Their lives are the foundations on which ours rest. It is horrible in one class to live without this consciousness of a mutual obligation, and mutual responsibility. All that we get, we get on trust, as trustee for them. I remember that Thring says somewhere, that "no beggar who creeps through the street living on alms and wasting them is baser than those who idly squander at school and afterwards the gifts received on trust."

I know that our class education isolates us and separates us from the uneducated and common people as we call them, makes us perhaps regard them as uninteresting, even repellent. Part of what we hope from the girls who come from great schools like this is, that they shall have a [Pg 62] larger sympathy, a truer heart. Remember all your life long a saying of Abraham Lincoln's, when he was President of the United States. Some one remarked in his hearing that he was quite a common-looking man. "Friend," he replied, gently, "the Lord loves common-looking people best; that is why He has made so many of them."

You can all make a *few* friends out of the lower class; you cannot do much; but learn to know and love a few, and then you will do wider good than you suspect.

But you are beginning to ask—Is all this religion? You expected something else. Let me remind you of the man who came to Jesus Christ, and asked Him what he should do to obtain eternal life. And this question, I may explain, means—What shall I do that I may enter on that divine and higher life now while I live; how can I most fully develop my spiritual nature? And the answer was —Love God; and love your neighbour as yourself. [Pg 63] Go outside yourself in love to all that is divine and ideal in thought and duty; go outside yourself in love to your neighbour—and your neighbour is every one with whom you have any relation; and then, and then alone, does your own nature grow to its highest and best. This is the open secret of true religion.

Eastertide is the teacher of ideals. Its great lesson is—"If ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above." If by calling yourself a Christian you mean that you aim at the higher, the spiritual, the divine life, then think of things that are above. [Greek: Ta anô phroneite], think heaven itself. And heaven lies around us in our daily life—not in the cloister, in incense-breathing aisle, in devotions that isolate us, and force a sentiment unreal, morbid, and even false, but in the generous and breathing activities of our life. Religion glorifies, because it idealizes, that very life we are each called on to lead. Look, therefore, round in your various lives and homes, and ask yourselves what is the ideal life for me here, in this position, as school-girl, [Pg 64] daughter, sister, friend, mistress, or in any other capacity. Education ought to enable you to frame an ideal; it ought to give you imagination, and sympathy, and intelligence, and resource; and religion ought to give you the strong motive, the endurance, the width of view, the nobleness of purpose, to make your life a light and a blessing wherever you are.

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[3] An Address given to St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews, on Sunday, April 13, 1890.

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