

TRAINED INTELLIGENCE, AND WHAT IT WILL DO FOR GIRLS.

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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 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 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 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.

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, 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 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 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 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 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.

“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.”