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The Value of Training for Women.

By MILDRED RANSOM.

ONE of the greatest obstacles in the path of women who are obliged to earn their own living is their lack of adequate preparation. Parents do not realize how important a proper training is, nor what a splendid advantage they bestow on those daughters who receive it. Women who will eventually be dependent on their own exertions ought to be trained to the idea from childhood exactly as a boy is trained. While a home is still one of their most valuable assets, and while they still have their parents to back them up with sound advice and financial help, they should be trained, and no parent ought to delay till these great advantages are perhaps things of the past, and the daughter is handicapped by having forgotten valuable habits inculcated in girlhood. Some of the saddest cases of helpless destitution are exhibited among the daughters of professional men, and, above all, of the clergy. Such women have been brought up in comfort and sometimes in luxury; their bread has been buttered for them by no effort of their own, and, in common parlance, they "have lived at home." Their occupation has usually been to undertake all the small duties of the household that nobody else finds it convenient to do, to fill their time with as much parish and social work as they can manage, and, above all, to see to the comfort of their relations, especially of their male relations. They have usually received a fair general education, which has partially fallen into the limbo of forgetfulness, or has atrophied for want of use; but they have rarely received any training by which they are able to earn a penny. Complaints of enforced inaction are usually met by the remark that "there is no need *now* for you to go out of your home." Such a reply is unconsciously tyrannical. It implies a future necessity to go out and work, but forbids an adequate preparation. It also is a bad policy, for talents are smothered, habits of promptness are lost, and a desultory routine

of inconsequent snippets of work is substituted for a definite purpose in life. All the lazy people of a household find unmarried women most useful; everyone who dislikes darning their own socks and stockings, taking care of their own children, writing their own letters, doing the parochial work for which they are paid, praise this sacrificial system, and hold it up to admiration.

Surely it is a terrible waste of good material to bring daughters up so aimlessly. No parents who spend their capital in starting their children in life can blame themselves if fortune does not shine perpetually on their efforts, but no relatives have any right to appropriate the best years of a woman's life, if they know that that appropriation means a hard future for the daughter who gives so willingly and freely.

It is far from my purpose to decry the good unselfish woman whose place is in a home where she is needed to perform specific duties. Such women give up liberty, they sacrifice their tastes, they sometimes forego marriage and love, all at the call of duty. Such unselfishness is a valuable asset to the nation, and I do not tilt against it, but rather against the selfishness of parents who prefer to keep their daughters at home, waiting upon the family, in entire disregard of the future. There ought to be more individual freedom, a greater liberty to choose, and with it would come less friction, less crying out over injustice. For when the mainstay of the family dies, the outlook is black indeed for the delicately nurtured daughters who are faced with the necessity of earning their own living. They believe—and it is sad to think how futile is the belief—that, in spite of their lack of training, pluck and perseverance will eventually bring them a post which will support them, and their disillusionment is tragic. Their energy is unsurpassed, their courage nothing can destroy, and their hopefulness is an object-lesson to those who growl and grumble because the responsibility of their post is too much or the pay is inadequate. They have not the faintest idea of social economy or what they are worth, and they believe that in the same way that the Jane Eyre type of young woman earned her living as a governess, they can become

secretaries, or fall back upon that refuge for the incapable, a companionship. But day by day they discover that the only education they have been given is thoroughly unmarketable, and that they are repeatedly eclipsed by properly trained workers.

It does not seem fair or just—let the advocates of a high birth-rate say what they will—to bring up a family with absolutely no means of support in case of that most usual of all catastrophes—death. I do not mean that each child need have a provision allotted to it from birth, but ordinary probability should be considered. A man whose income has never exceeded £400 from all sources, and who has no prospect of increasing it, or of saving a reasonable sum, has no right to keep any child, son or daughter, in idleness merely for the selfish comfort of the household and to the future detriment of the child.

Men of the middle, especially of the professional, classes appear to entertain the most lively faith concerning the future of their daughters, while they have none concerning their sons. Here they leave nothing to chance. The boys are carefully educated, and the parents and daughters are pinched for years to provide the wherewithal; but for the daughters anything is good enough. And certainly, if a woman is going to spend her entire life “doing flowers,” darning stockings, and paying calls, there seems some justification for this theory; but, in point of fact, women are rarely able to spend their whole lives in these amiable pursuits. Most daughters expect to outlive their parents, and if they do and are not married, they will find it very difficult to keep the wolf from the door. A professional man who has educated two or three sons and launched them in the world can rarely do more than provide for the future of his wife, and the daughters—well, the daughters have to eat the bread of charitable relations.

It will probably be suggested that in many cases the sons alone are educated because the parents cannot afford to do more, and “the boys have to earn their own living.” This argument

is a survival of the time when women were supported by their relations as a matter of course, and when the domestic arts had not been removed forcibly to factories and workshops, but it is sadly out of date now. Brothers of the present day would be much surprised if told that because the bulk of available capital had been concentrated on their advancement, they were now bound to support their sisters, and the modern view that each unit ought to be self-supporting is a far healthier one. It is infinitely better for all the sons and daughters of a family to be financially independent, if possible, and it tends greatly to family respect and peace.

The line of least resistance is a favourite path to tread, and it is far easier to spend money on a boy than on a girl. The profit is more obvious. All professions are open to them, and the number of scholarships, exhibitions, and various other plums are legion compared to the small amount attainable by their sisters. Therefore most parents prefer to push the boy and hope for the best with the girl. But this ease of attainment, these scholastic plums, this width of choice for the boy, ought to weigh down the scale in favour of the girl if there is not enough for both. Sex is no bar to the boy; it is a legal handicap to the girl. A boy has, *ceteris paribus*, merely to choose his profession; the girl finds her choice limited to very few. Morally, the girl has the greater claim, for the difficulties in her path are far greater, and, moreover, they are absolutely beyond her control. Brains, capacity, and admirable courage have hitherto failed to unbar for her the gate of the legal profession; the executive ranks of the Civil Service are closed to her; she can fill no office of State; she is obviously unfitted for the fighting professions; she cannot become a parson, a sailor, an architect, or an engineer; and public opinion keeps her out of many places wherein she could fitly employ herself.

But the greatest obstacle to equal education and opportunities for sons and daughters is the attitude of the average man or woman to marriage. Byron's lines are still quoted, and love is still regarded as "woman's whole existence." This Oriental

point of view colours the plans of thousands of parents. But our race seems to be ever reluctant to carry out its beliefs; and while many parents assert that woman's vocation is marriage—and nothing but marriage—it is the rarest possible event to find daughters systematically trained for matrimony and motherhood; in fact, it is considered highly indelicate even to suggest such a thing. What is the result? Women undertake marriage without the slightest training in the care and nurture of infants, without the smallest idea of modern (or ancient) skill in housewifely qualities, and with no knowledge of the science and economy of food—with, in fact, no preparation whatever for what is declared to be their special vocation. We know more about prevention of disease and evil and the science of food supply than ever before, but of what use is this to the modern bride, who appears to be densely ignorant of everything appertaining to marriage except her trousseau? Parents allege that marriage is woman's true profession; then let them give their daughters adequate training and preparation. If a man has a vocation for Holy Orders or the Bar, his parents take good care that he shall be properly instructed and developed, but women are allowed to undertake the responsible and complicated duties of matrimony with no more preparation than they give to the various odd jobs with which their life has been filled.

We have been overdosed with advice on the birth-rate. It would be well if the women of the nation considered the infant death-rate. One of its direct causes is admittedly the lack of training of young mothers both as to the care of their own health and that of their children. In 1906, 16,385 infants died under one year old, and of these 2,130 died of wasting diseases, under which heading is included atrophy and lack of their natural food. Of these 16,385, nearly 5,000 died in the first month of their lives; and the mortality of all ages is greatly aided by the inappropriate food upon which many young children are fed. It is quite erroneous to state that this improper treatment and feeding is found only among the uneducated classes, for mothers and grandmothers of a higher class are equally

deficient in common-sense. They give infants "comforters" to suck, regardless of the fact that it is not possible to cleanse them, and that these "comforters" are undoubtedly the cause of many fatal diseases to children. A baby of my acquaintance sits and chews his father's briar pipe, imbibing nicotine amid the admiration of a delighted family. A rag dipped in hot water, with sugar tied up in it, is considered excellent nutriment in many homes, and the rag never appears to be washed or changed. Any worker among the poor will agree that the use of gin and pickles as infants' food is so common as hardly to call for comment. I once travelled in the same compartment with a well-to-do family consisting of father, mother, and four children, one of whom was a baby at the breast. Halfway to London all the children pulled mugs out of their pockets, and one child produced a doll's wooden pail, about two inches high. Beer was served round over and over again, and when we reached town all the children, including the baby, were intoxicated.

The infant mortality has now become so serious that our Health Authorities have taken up the matter, and Health Visitors are sent by the London County Council to homes of newborn infants to visit the mothers and improve the conditions affecting infant life. Several districts in London supplement these efforts by a supply of modified milk, and the results seem to have been excellent.

Ignorance of the science of food-supply is by no means the only cause of infant mortality. Carelessness and a remarkable want of common sense is responsible for much. The above instances illustrate this, and I may add that measles is a case in point. It is still regarded as a trifle, from which all children must suffer, and even among the educated classes children are still put to sleep in the room with an infected brother or sister, "so that they may all have it at once, and get it over." Tradition dies hard, and it will be long before parents realize that certain infectious diseases successfully attack children, not by ordinary course of nature, but because children are less able

than adults to resist them. The longer a child can be preserved from infectious disease, the better chance it has of escaping altogether, and of building up a good constitution. No grown person would deliberately try their system and upset their health by inducing measles or chicken-pox "to get it over," but would prefer to keep well. Why, then, should such a strain be put on delicate young children? If the lives now sacrificed to the great Moloch of ignorance could be saved, no one would need to trouble about the birth-rate. But in order to save those valuable little lives, in order to strengthen the sickly weaklings who owe their bad start to their parents' mistakes, it is necessary that fathers and mothers should have been taught the modern laws of health, and that they should not delay acquiring the knowledge till their marriage. Knowledge does not come by instinct, whatever our grandmothers may have believed, and the training of women in matters of infant nurture should begin in earliest childhood. If marriage is considered to be woman's vocation, it is high time that the advocates of this theory took active steps to train their daughters for the state. So common-sense a step would materially improve the physique of the next generation.

We belong to a highly organized civilization, and if we fall behind modern progress the consequences to ourselves and to posterity will be serious. Haphazard, untrained methods may have produced excellent results in past years, but they are useless now. It is no good to protest that what was good enough for our grandmothers is good enough for us. Our grandmothers did not enter the labour market; they were almost unknown in the learned professions; according to one of Jane Austen's heroines, "marriage was their only honourable provision," and the immensely increased sphere of action of their descendants was a blank to them. Other times, other manners; and it is futile to apply the maxims of bygone days to the twentieth century when social problems are concerned. Having lost control of the domestic arts, women have definitely demanded the larger life, the more extended sphere, and there

is no doubt that they will obtain eventually far more than they now possess. But in order to make the most of modern opportunities, and to insure a reasonable prospect of success to the worker, the economic conditions of to-day must be studied and proper systematic training must be given to fit the back to the burden.



Studies in Texts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SERMONS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

BY THE REV. HARRINGTON C. LEES, M.A.

Suggestive book : Ramsay's " Luke the Physician " (= R.). Others quoted : Hastings' " Dictionary " (= H.) ; " Dictionary of Christ and Gospels " (= C.G.) ; Mackinlay's " Magi " (= M.) ; " Expositor's Greek Testament " (= E.) ; M. G. Pearse's " Short Talks " (= P.).

TEXT : " Rest unto your souls. "—MATT. xi. 29.

" **M**OST characteristic, most exquisite, most perfectly adapted to needs of man. There was no second Christ to speak those words " (R., 95). Three conditions of Christian restfulness.

I. PROXIMITY. " Come unto ME, and I will rest you. " " The words are as wide as the burden of every trial, and every sorrow men know " (R., 96). They have a real application to burdened sinners, but spoken primarily to tired workers. He thinks of them as draught-oxen (κοπιῶντες) wearied out under the yoke, and as baggage-animals overweighted (πεφορτισμένοι) with loads, to whom their master calls that they may have their weights removed. The words specially significant if spoken in Sabbatical year, when men were resting physically, and beasts found burden light and yoke easy (M., 113).

II. HUMILITY. " Take MY yoke, for I am meek and lowly in heart. " It implies stooping (Lev. xxvi. 13). This is not easy (Rom. x. 3). But He bent also (cf. Eph. iv. 1, 2 ; Col. iii. 12, implying Paul knew Matt. xi. 29 R., 94 n.). It implies servitude (1 Kings xii. 4). But what a contrast to Jewish hard labour ! (Acts xv. 10, 28 ; Matt. xxiii. 4 ; see R., 95). " Jesus discovered a nation under the yokes of law, of Rome, of sin " (C.G., ii. 843).

III. DOCILITY. " Learn of ME, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. " " Intense yearning for receptive scholars at a time when painfully conscious of prevalent unreceptivity " (E., i. 179). Christ the Carpenter must have made many yokes " easy "—i.e., kindly to wear. " A gentle device to make hard labour light " (Drummond). So here rest *discovered* as we progress *with Him*. " Yoke " implies a pair " (cf. Luke ii. 24, Greek). " Father's yokes always made heavier one side : then the light end would come on the weak bullock, because the stronger one had