

## CHAPTER XVI.—FEMALE EDUCATION.

- § 1. DAME SCHOOLS.—§ 2. GIRLS' SCHOOLS.—§ 3. SUBJECTS TAUGHT.—  
§ 4. HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS.—§ 5. MIXED SCHOOLS.—  
§ 6. MORTIFICATIONS.

TAKING advantage of the ungentlemanly decision of grammarians, that the masculine is more worthy than the feminine gender, we have postponed our notice of dame schools, girls' schools, or female education generally, until the male Teacher and *his* school were first disposed of.

§ 1. Dame schools, which, to some extent, formerly supplied the place of the present system of Infant schools, have, it need hardly be said, filled a useful place in the old educational machinery of Scotland. The Dame was usually an old woman—generally an old widow or maid—who received under her charge young children of both sexes, and taught them such lessons as she was capable of imparting, and they of learning; and it may safely be said that she was not qualified to teach many subjects, nor to carry her pupils far forward in the branches taught. The children were taught a little of reading and spelling, and perhaps some moral lessons; but in the more advanced dame schools, there was in addition to reading,<sup>1</sup> a little of plain writing, of simple calculations, and of industrial training—including knitting and sewing, taught to boys as well as girls. Most of our grandfathers and grandmothers received their first school impressions at seminaries of this description, and indeed very often the only schooling with which they were blessed. But for the instruc-

<sup>1</sup> They read Scots or English with the good old Scotch accent: the books were the Westminster Shorter Catechism—afterwards committed to memory—the Proverbs of Solomon, the Psalms of David, the New Testament, and last the Old Testament; only a few were taught writing and arithmetic.

tion given at the dame school, usually attended by children ranging in age from three to seven or eight years, the subsequent demand for their labour rendered it probable that they would be brought up altogether ignorant of letters. These little schools, although they rendered greater service to society than merely the keeping of young children out of harm's way by preparing them for the parochial and burgh schools, were beneath the notice of town councils, who offered them little or no encouragement, and exercised no superintendence over them so long as they were content to communicate nothing more than the mere elements of knowledge; but if the Dame presumed to teach any advanced subject, the school was summarily extinguished as a poacher on the preserves of the burgh school.<sup>1</sup> Dame schools, being thus mainly dependent upon the humbler classes of the community, have, though frequently subsidised by benevolent neighbours, ceased to exist in Scotland, and their place has been taken up by the Infant schools, which have sprung into existence within our own recollection.

§ 2. Though the town councils took little or no cognisance of dame schools—adventure schools, at which young children of both sexes were taught by women—they seem to have taken considerable interest, from an early period, in female schools, where girls were taught to read intelligently, write fairly, spell more or less correctly, and work a little sum in commercial arithmetic; but the principal subject of instruction given at girls' schools was needlework, and in some instances the teaching comprehended a little of domestic economy, including the important art of cooking.

§ 3. We give a few extracts to show the subjects commonly taught in girls' schools—extracts which may serve to throw some light on the important subject of female education during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1612 the female children in the burgh of Stirling were taught English and writing;<sup>2</sup> in 1618 the council of Paisley ordained 'none to be put to the sewing schuill till they can

<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> Burgh Records of Stirling.

red perfytlie;'<sup>1</sup> in 1642 Lady Gordon of Rothiemay, of good memory, destined for the love she had to virtue in woman, a sum of money for 'teaching young women and lasses in the town of Aberdeen reading, writing, and sewing, and any other art or science for which they may be capable;'<sup>2</sup> the subjects of instruction are more particularly enumerated in a subsequent entry dated 1648, when the schoolmistress taught, we are told, 'reading, writing, sewing, and music;'<sup>3</sup> in 1694 the council of Stirling, considering how necessary it is to have a 'gentlewoman for educating the daughters of burgesses,' appointed a yearly salary to be given for her encouragement; and in the following year Mrs Adieson taught young 'women and girls in all things proper and necessar to be learned by them;'<sup>4</sup> in 1698 the schoolmistress of Irvine taught children 'such arts as are taught to children in Edinburgh;'<sup>5</sup> in 1719 the council of Dumfries contributed to the support of a school, in which 'shaping and sewing all sorts of white and coloured seams, embroidering, and paistry' were taught to girls;<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Records of Paisley.

<sup>2</sup> Burgh Records of Aberdeen.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Burgh Records of Stirling.

<sup>5</sup> Burgh Records of Irvine.

<sup>6</sup> M'Dowall's History of Dumfries, 504. In 1753 the council of the same burgh admitted a cook and confectioner as a freeman and burgess, on condition of teaching poor girls the 'arts of cookery and confectionery or paistry:' Ibid., 505. From these and other notices it appears that long ago provision was made as much for teaching cooking and sewing—subjects, alas! almost now blank at our girls' schools—as there is in our day for teaching crochet, drawing, and music—accomplishments, no doubt, highly interesting, but of less consequence, we should think, to our poorer middle-class girls than industrial training, including economy of living and domestic affairs generally. Instead of the culinary art advancing like other branches of knowledge, our countrywomen appear to be less skilled therein than their grandmothers. Too many persons now complain of the cooking as practised at home, and the complaint is so general—and to our cost, we know, well founded—that bachelors, young and old, are thankful to dine anywhere rather than at their lodgings—at clubs, boarding-houses, chop-houses, cooks' shops, etc. Indeed, the tendency, more especially among the poorer classes, is to abolish altogether the old-fashioned practice of preparing victuals at home, and to resort to cooks' shops for procuring ready-made meals.

in 1722 a mistress was elected by the town of Brechin to instruct little girls in the 'arts of sewing and working of lace;'<sup>1</sup> in 1726 the council of Stirling nominated a schoolmistress for instructing girls in sewing white and coloured seam, shaping, washing, dressing, etc., with this provision, that whatever 'crape' she shall require for making 'dead cloathes,' she shall buy the same from merchants in the burgh, as she shall be directed by her employers, the merchants supplying the same at rates as easy as she could be served from other burghs, the expense of carriage being considered;<sup>2</sup> in 1727 the council of Glasgow approved of a contract nominating a mistress of the public school erected in the city for teaching girls to spin flax into fine yarn fit for making thread or cambric;<sup>3</sup> in 1735 a girls' school was established at Arbroath; two years later, the magistrates, with the view of encouraging the school, prohibited all other persons from teaching girls to 'sew, work lace, etc., without the liberty of the council;'<sup>4</sup> in 1736 the council of Forres, considering the disadvantage caused by the want of a capable woman to teach the young girls white and coloured seam, appointed a schoolmistress of the burgh;<sup>5</sup> in 1757 the schoolmistress of Wigtown taught coloured seam and white seam only, but was capable of teaching 'Dresden' and embroidery;<sup>6</sup> in 1761 the council of Fortrose appointed a schoolmistress for teaching plain and coloured seam, and other branches of female education;<sup>7</sup> in 1764 a

Steps are now being taken to remedy this evil—an evil which is seriously disturbing our social happiness—by establishing schools of cookery in important centres, and there is a probability of our females, including mothers and daughters, having soon an opportunity to learn the practice from professional teachers. But even if the scheme succeeded, and that itinerant lecturers visited places too small to support efficient teachers, it will, we fear, take a long time before the great mass of our women shall be educated in domestic economy—a subject with which every German lady is thoroughly conversant.

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Records of Brechin.

<sup>2</sup> Burgh Records of Stirling.

<sup>3</sup> Burgh Records of Glasgow.

<sup>4</sup> Hay's History of Arbroath, 264.

<sup>5</sup> Burgh Records of Forres.

<sup>6</sup> Burgh Records of Wigtown.

<sup>7</sup> Burgh Records of Fortrose. In 1843 and 1844 payments were made to Miss Fraser, teacher of the female school of the burgh.

schoolmistress of Ayr taught young women 'sewing, embroidering, and other accomplishments proper for that sex;'<sup>1</sup> in 1782 there was a boarding and public school in Ayr for educating the young women of the burgh, at which 'everything was taught as complete as at Edinburgh,' a great saving, it is added, to the inhabitants, a convenience to the neighbourhood, and an advantage to the town at large, in bringing gentlemen's children to it;<sup>2</sup> in 1769 a school was opened in Dundee for instructing in the 'branches taught to young ladies in Edinburgh.'<sup>3</sup>

From these extracts it will be seen that the education of our girls consisted mainly of industrial training, and that there was little of the 'accomplishments' which have since come so largely into fashion. But after the middle of last century we find the subject of female education attracting some attention; in several places there was a demand for providing women with means of more liberal education than had been hitherto available. Thus in 1756 the council of Dunfermline resolved to provide remedy 'against the great loss caused to the town through the want of a proper schoolmistress to teach girls;'<sup>4</sup> in 1765 the council of Kirkcudbright passed a resolution to the same effect;<sup>5</sup> in 1762 the council of Banff, considering that although the grammar school has been hitherto well conducted, the girls' education has been much neglected, resolved, therefore, to establish a school for teaching such branches of education as are proper to be taught to young women under a schoolmistress;<sup>6</sup> in 1763 a schoolmistress was chosen for 'teaching young ladies and gentlemen the branches of education fit for them;'<sup>7</sup> in 1764 it is represented to the magistrates and council of Ayr, that 'having shown their willingness to promote the education of the male sex, it was hoped they would be pleased to do something for the other sex;'<sup>8</sup> a petition was presented to the

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Records of Ayr.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Burgh Records of Dundee.

<sup>4</sup> Burgh Records of Dunfermline.

<sup>5</sup> Burgh Records of Kirkcudbright.

<sup>6</sup> Burgh Records of Banff.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Burgh Records of Ayr.

council of Forfar in 1770 representing the miserable condition of young girls from want of proper education: they 'are shamefully neglected, and seldom or never in this town receive the proper rudiments of education, finding the loss thereof all the days of their lives;'<sup>1</sup> in 1795 the council of Arbroath, considering that an able and fit schoolmistress was much wanted for the town, gave one a salary of £6—increased in 1809 to ten guineas.<sup>2</sup> It thus appears that the authorities were becoming to some extent alive to the necessity of promoting a more liberal education among women than was previously common; and doubtless appeals or remonstrances like those quoted bore fruit in course of time. Accordingly, in the early part of last century, greater educational advantages began to be conferred on our girls, and the course of education for women, which is still the prevailing one, was inaugurated, the industrial training formerly so general unfortunately dropping out to a large extent. Thus in 1810 there were taught in the female school of Elgin reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, elocution, geography, plain, coloured, and fancy works, French, music, singing, and drawing;<sup>3</sup> in the female school of Tain, in 1835, English, French, needlework, music, and drawing were taught;<sup>4</sup> in that of Selkirk in the same year, English, writing, sewing, and drawing;<sup>5</sup> in the female school of Crail, again in the same year, reading, writing, sewing, and knitting were taught,<sup>6</sup> the useful predominating over the ornamental branches.

§ 4. Unfortunately the old fallacy with regard to the education of women, viz., that the higher instruction was not necessary for them, is not yet exploded, but we are slowly

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Records of Forfar.      <sup>2</sup> Hay's History of Arbroath, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> Session Papers, 541, pp. 61, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Municipal Corporations Report, ii., 425.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, ii., 399.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 158. Several of the burghs continued to support girls' schools until the demand for female education brought into existence day-schools and boarding-schools numerous enough to overtake the education of all our girls who wished to avail themselves of that class of schools. In 1835 there were only ten female schools under the patronage of the town councils.

realising that any knowledge calculated to improve the human mind should be communicated to women, no less than to men. Indeed, woman, being by 'birth and destiny' the greatest educator of the two sexes, would seem to require higher education more urgently than man, whose most important education—carried on by means of universities, libraries, travels, and business—only begins where that of woman too often ends. The higher education of women, hitherto so culpably neglected, being therefore not less important than that of men, the next generation will have to address itself to the question of providing proper schools for our middle-class girls—that large class between those attending elementary schools and boarding 'establishments.' The absence of such schools must speedily come to be recognised as one of the greatest wants of the day. There are in abundance schools good enough for the education of their brothers—boys who fill our burgh schools and commercial schools—but with few exceptions, including the schools lately organised by the Merchant Company at Edinburgh, the girls' schools embracing a complete curriculum of proper studies are few in number. At present the question of providing a thorough system of instruction for girls—of extending to our daughters the means of higher education—is too much ignored, and we have been hitherto content to send them to day-schools and boarding-schools, which are notoriously inefficient and superficial,<sup>1</sup> chiefly occupied in imparting a showy education—accomplishments acquired not so much for purposes of intellectual discipline, as for attracting attention.<sup>2</sup> The subjects professed at this class of schools are two or three foreign languages, the

<sup>1</sup> The defects of girls' schools are thus summed up in the Report of the Schools Enquiry Commission: 'Want of thoroughness, foundation, system, and organisation; slovenliness and showy superficiality; inattention to rudiments; undue time given to accomplishments, and these not taught intelligently or in any successful manner.' This indictment, which applies to English schools, is, we fear, applicable to some extent also to Scottish schools.

<sup>2</sup> 'The so-called lady-accomplishments,' says Jean Paul Richter, in his 'Doctrine of Education,' 'are at most but garlands of flowers by which

grammars of which are not logically or thoroughly taught ; music, taught mechanically, without reference to the theory of harmony ; drawing, mere copying, without any study of the laws of form, colour, and perspective ; dancing, calisthenics, and what is called 'English education,' including writing, arithmetic, use of the globes, geography, history, grammar, and elocution. Too many subjects are professed, and the consequence is that no branch is well taught ; the mind is concentrated on no subject, the system requiring no thoroughness in any department. In boys' schools, on the other hand, there is generally a thorough grounding at least in one branch, usually classics or mathematics, and it is certain that thoroughness in a single subject is productive of more good in educating the faculties than all the smattering acquired at these 'establishments for young ladies'—at which all that is interesting in the study of a subject—the *rationale* or principle—is invariably excluded. Altogether, the instruction which, at the present time, we give to our girls, is very defective in intellectual basis—in preparation for the duties of life—and the question therefore arises, what are the requirements necessary for improving women's education ? There is an attempt in several places to solve this question by assimilating the courses of studies in our best girls' schools and boys' schools ; and it stands to reason that what is good for educating a boy, is equally good, *mutatis mutandis*, for educating a girl, *et vice versa*. Formerly classics and mathematics were the subjects mainly taught to boys, and music, drawing, and modern languages to girls ; at present it would seem as if classics and mathematics were finding their way into girls' schools ; and, on the other hand, modern languages and fine arts are being largely introduced into boys' schools, the great subject of English literature being equally necessary for both. With the view, therefore, of promoting the higher education of women, the plan which most recom-

Cupid may be bound ; but Hymen, who breaks through these and garlands of fruit too, is best guided and held by the golden official chain of domestic capability.'



mends itself to our best educationists is to provide schools, teachers, methods, discipline, organisations, examinations,<sup>1</sup> inspections, diplomas or certificates, for girls, similar to those which exist for boys, and to make the subjects of instruction, as much as possible, the same in both schools, the time-tables being different, that is, the boys and girls not necessarily devoting equal time to the same subject. Towards accomplishing this end, it is believed that our secondary schools are capable of being utilised more than they have hitherto been; thus classes might be established in connection with burgh schools and academies, which are not open now to girls (such as Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow, etc.), the school boards making arrangements to employ the same teachers for both sexes. Further, in order to promote higher knowledge among women it is necessary that the girls should continue their studies beyond the period when they are too frequently said to have 'finished their education;' and to enable them to extend the school period, colleges or universities should be established for their use, just as exist for young men after they complete their school career.<sup>2</sup>

But it is not now enough to provide for our middle and lower class girls, good secondary schools and colleges. Considering the extent of female industry—the vast number of

<sup>1</sup> The importance of examinations for promoting the higher instruction of girls was long ago felt by so distinguished a master as Dr Arnold of Rugby, who in 1841 wrote to Mr Justice Coleridge: 'There is nothing for girls like the degree examinations. Unless we had a domestic examination for young ladies, to be passed before they come out, and another, like the great *go*, before they come of age, I do not see how women can be educated intellectually. Seriously I do not see how we can supply sufficient encouragement for systematic and laborious reading, or how we can censure many things being retained at once fully in the mind, when we are wholly without the machinery which we have for boys.' Important advances have recently been made in this direction in the provisions for examination of women by the University Local Examinations of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, and Edinburgh.

<sup>2</sup> Some progress has already been made in supplying our women with the means of higher education: *e.g.*, at Girton College, Newnham Hall, Edinburgh Ladies' Educational Association, London University College.

women who support themselves and frequently their families by means of various occupations, including shopkeeping, manufactures, fisheries, needlework, teaching, domestic service, agriculture, commercial occupations, etc.—it is to be hoped that suitable schools shall be founded for preparing them for their practical business, and qualifying them for higher and more remunerative employment. This might be accomplished by means of evening classes, and by admitting them to schools established for giving technical instruction to men.

Schools and colleges, however good and efficient, may fail in educating our women to be good sisters, good mothers, good wives, and good servants, if good education begins not at home—if the affections are not cultivated, and house-keeping duties neglected. An education, therefore, more important than that acquired at the elementary or secondary schools, or even at the university, is *Home Training*, the department of girls' education which, it is maintained, is at present most neglected, and needs most care. Home education is the first and greatest business of mothers—compared with which all others are small. The children's future welfare—happiness and misery—mainly depends on the manner in which the Mother discharges the solemn duty entrusted to her by God. From her teaching, conduct, and spirit, they derive their impressions of what is right and wrong, their good or bad habits, their virtuous or vicious principles.

§ 5. There are indications in the burgh records that the subject of mixed education engaged the attention of an earlier generation: in 1602 the council of Ayr ordained the girls who are learning to read and write at the grammar school to be sent to the master of the sang school, 'because it is not seemly that sic lasses should be among the lads.'<sup>1</sup> An entry somewhat similar occurs in the minutes of the town council of Dundee: in 1712 the council ordained the English high school

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Records of Ayr. In 1598 the council of Aberdeen license two persons and their spouses to teach 'maiden bairns,' but forbid them to have a 'man doctour' under them: Burgh Records of Aberdeen.

'to be kept alenarly for girls above ten years of age.'<sup>1</sup> Persons who take interest in questions of education are still divided in opinion with regard to the propriety of teaching boys and girls together, more especially after they cease to be children. The burgh school assistant commissioners condemn the system, on the ground that the 'influence of mixed schools is not beneficial from a social point of view.'<sup>2</sup> Others, on the contrary, instead of merely denying that any mischief has resulted from the meeting of boys and girls at our public schools, contend that mixed education is necessary for preserving the moral character of the pupils,<sup>3</sup> and further, that it is the best system for acquiring a complete education. The mixed system appears to be more in harmony with the laws of nature than that which would divide the pupils into classes according to which each sex would be taught by itself. For example, a family, consisting of boys and girls, will, it is said, be better educated than if composed of one sex only. It would indeed seem as if Providence intended that the sexes should influence each other from their birth to their death, and at no time is this influence more necessary than when their characters are being formed. Possibly the character of the girls may, by being taught with the boys, suffer to some extent from the rough and boisterous manners of their companions; but, on the other hand, it is certain that the boys will suffer *more* from the absence of the girls than the girls from the presence of the boys. From a moral point of view, therefore, it may be concluded that though the mixed system is not without its drawbacks (what system is?), the balance of advantages appears to be decidedly in its favour, provided it can be carried out under proper regulations, in-

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Records of Dundee.      <sup>2</sup> Report on Burgh Schools, i., 89.

<sup>3</sup> Richter, one of the greatest of German thinkers, says in his 'Levana: 'To insure modesty I would advise the educating of the sexes together; for two boys will preserve twelve girls, or two girls twelve boys, innocent amidst winks, jokes, and improprieties, merely by that instinctive sense which is the forerunner of natural modesty: But I will guarantee nothing in a school where girls are alone together, and still less where boys are.'

cluding, if thought necessary, especially for the higher schools, separate entrances from the streets, separate staircases, separate entrances into the schoolroom, and separate courtyards. Intellectually, the advantages are *all* in favour of the boys and girls being taught together, and contrary to the system of isolation. The daily contact of the sexes softens, purifies, quickens, and inspires the boys, while it gives balance, strength, and buoyancy to the girls; it establishes their relative capacity to pursue the same course, and to undergo the same tests<sup>1</sup>—accustoming the public mind to the idea of both sexes working towards common objects.<sup>2</sup> Further, the mixed system is attended with greater economy, and with larger educational advantages—great recommendations in its favour; teachers assure us, for example, that a school composed of both sexes is more teachable and manageable than the same number of either sex, by themselves; and it is certain that if the sexes were separated, the cost of education would not only be largely increased—and it is heavy enough already for the ratepayers—but the girls would not have the same educational advantages which they have at present—either with regard to teachers, buildings, or playgrounds. On the whole, therefore, it would, we think, be rash to condemn or change a system against which no charge can be substantiated, and which has not hitherto been attended with any mischief.

§ 6. Mortifications to female schools are so rare as to justify that of the pious Lady Gordon of Rothiemay being given with little abridgment: In 1642, Katherin Forbes, relict of William Gordon of Rothiemay, of good memory, for the honour of God, her love to virtue in woman, and to all women virtuously disposed, mortifies to the town council of Aberdeen £1000 Scots, of which the annual rent shall be

<sup>1</sup> The burgh school commissioners reported in 1868, that in the more advanced school work including English, classics, and mathematics, the girls did as well as the boys, and that in the modern languages they did better; in all the schools they found the girls more conscientious and industrious workers than the boys: Report, i., 85.

<sup>2</sup> National Union for Improving the Education of Women.

given for the maintenance of a woman for keeping a school in the burgh, for teaching young women and lasses; the school-mistress shall be a widow of honest report, of grave and modest carriage and behaviour, of good life and conversation, free of public scandal, religiously inclined, and fearing God; or she shall be a virgin or maid of age and discretion, grave and modest, fit for such a charge; if the widow or maid shall marry or prove scandalous, she shall be removed from her office; further, adds the pious lady, because a woman of the necessary quality and condition cannot at present be found, the interest of the money shall be added to the principal sum until the school be erected.<sup>1</sup>

The absence of endowments for the education of girls is a remarkable phenomenon in the history of our national education. The fact of no mortifications having been made expressly for girls has led some to suppose that foundations, at present appropriated for boys, may have been originally intended for boys *and* girls, and that the founders had no intention of excluding from the benefit children of the burgh or parish in respect of their sex. The true explanation of the fact, we think, is that our grandfathers and grandmothers attached so little importance to the higher education of girls, as to have thought it unnecessary—probably a waste of means, to make any provision to give free or assisted education to their daughters, for whom, in their opinion, education, at least the higher education, was not necessary, in order to their being good wives, good mothers, good mistresses, and good servants. The difficulty of giving higher education to girls, and its costliness as compared with that of boys, have induced some educationists to recommend that endowments should be extended to the former, in order to provide them with good education at moderate expense.

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Records of Aberdeen.