

[Proper Education for Girls]

Before one can decide what kind of training either the average boy or girl should have ~~in the~~ world, we must take into account what that average boy or girl will probably do. We have devised a system of general education for all young people, which is based on the fact that everyone born must, if he has anything approaching a normal life, be provided with the tools for freely communicating with his fellows. He must be able to talk and talk with the words which those with whom he is living understand; he must read and write; he must be able to use figures; he must know enough of the current knowledge that the members of his own group have to be able to understand them.

Now, it is by what we call the "common school" education that we give these tools to every boy and girl. But there is another thing. The average boy or girl has something before him beside that of communicating with his fellows. He is bound to be called upon, when he reaches the age of fourteen and, unhappily, sometimes sooner, to contribute and sometimes to do what we call, earning his living; that is, this average boy or girl must begin very young to do enough productive work to pay for his food and clothes.

What training, then, shall we give? The training that we can give him of course depends upon what he is probably going to be called upon to do. We are going

to drop the boy out of this little discussion. What is the average girl going to be called upon to do? And here let me introduce a few figures. They are the basis of my argument. According to the census of 1910, of which we are just getting returns, there are in the United States something over forty-five and a half million girls and women. About half of them, that is, about twenty-two and a half million are over 21 years of age; about are over 10 years of age. Of these twenty-two and a half million are married. We may really assume that as large a proportion of the remaining twenty-two and a half millions will be married.

Now I do not suppose that it is necessary for me to quote figures to prove that the chief occupation of these girls and women is, or shall be, what we call "housekeeping." Moreover, it is going to be housekeeping on small means. It is hard for those of us who live in what are called "well-living circles," -- those of us who can count one or two multimillionaires, several millionaires and many people with incomes which run into the thousands, to realize that the average income of a family in this United States is less than \$500 a year! I never quote those figures that I do not go back myself to the United States statistics and go over and over the figures.

Well, now then, we have a majority of this great mass of women who are, or will soon be,

keeping house, doing their task on a very small income. Now for a moment forget these figures and take up a new side. This great mass of women keeping house is not at all the women that we talk much about in these days. The woman that we discuss generally at such conventions as this, that our commissions and investigating committees are interested in, that we write about in our magazines and newspapers, is what we call the "woman in industry," that is, the woman who is earning her living, and generally we mean the woman earning her living in factories and shops and offices. She has received so large a proportion of our attention that I fear we sometimes think that she is the majority of the sex.

But now turn again to my United States figures. Out of the nearly forty-five million young and old women in the United States, there are, as a matter of fact, only about seven million over 10 years of age who are working in what the United States census calls "gainful occupations." Now, if you come to analyze these seven million, that is, find out what they are really doing, you will find that only about 20% of them (a million and a half) are in shops and factories. By far the largest proportion of these women engaged in any one occupation are in what the census calls "domestic service," that is, about 40% of our seven million working women "work out," as it is sometimes called.

Now, there is another point about these seven million women that I want to call to your attention, and that is, that their working life - and by that I mean the period for which they stay at trades or professions or any service - is far less than that of men. The actual working life of a woman is probably less than five years. I never have been able to get any figures that entirely satisfied me on this point. In the telephone industry they tell me that the average working life of the girl is about three years. In different factories in which I have inquired, I have found it running from three to five years. Now, of course, we all know what this means. By far the greater number of these seven million women, after from three to five years' work, marry and go to housekeeping.

Now, what have we then? Why simply the fact that an overwhelming majority of our average girls and women are going to do housekeeping. Now on this kind of statistics, what kind of industrial training should the average girl get? I have no hesitation personally, in saying with all the emphasis of which I am capable, that the only early industrial training that we should give to a girl is that in domestic industries. And I want to say with all the emphasis of which I am capable, that I believe that one of the most important industrial undertakings there is in this world, from every

point of view - economically, socially, ethically - is for us to turn all our forces to seeing to it that this training in domestic industry shall be as general and shall begin as young as the training that the girl gets in what we call the "3 Rs," that is, the training that she is given in the common school in those tools for communicating with her fellows, of which I spoke before. If I could have my way about it, I would have this domestic training beginning at the start, as I have said, and running through the entire term up to fourteen or sixteen, as it may be. I should have on the heels of this training in every town and state the country over, a school in scientific domestic work to which the girl who had shown particular aptitude for domestic work, could go. This school would serve as a link between the primary training and the higher education which our agricultural colleges give us and such training as we have now in many of our schools - the Margaret West School in Pittsburgh, for instance - institutions which train women for teaching domestic science, for making skilled housekeepers, but which have practically no organized instruction leading up to them. That is, I mean I would have instruction in domestic science as complete as that in what we call "academic work" and I would have the preliminary training as universal for the girl as her instruction in reading and writing; and I would give it for the same reason that I would train her in reading and writing, because the great majority is

almost certainly going to be called upon to do some kind of domestic work, and as things are now practically all girls are coming up to the time when they are to do this work without any knowledge of the commonest processes. There are many reasons why I feel so strongly on this subject.

The first is the girl herself. Consider what happens when an unskilled girl marries. She is undertaking one of the most many-sided and difficult jobs in the world. And we have not thought enough of this work to train her systematically for it, that is, she is an unskilled laborer. What is the logic of this? How can we expect her to have anything but a certain contempt for the duties of the household when we have in no way given her her training for them? How can they be anything but mystery and drudgery to her? How can she have any desire but to escape from them as something uncongenial, unworthy of her metal?

One of the greatest wrongs, it seems to me, that we do to women to-day is to allow them to go out, in the hundreds of thousands, into this business of home-making - a thing which we must all admit is essential to society - without ever having given them any idea of the difficulties or the importance of the tasks that are awaiting them, or ever having given them any intimation that it is a scientific business for which one can be trained as for any other business. So much for the girl.

But there is another side to this, and that is the awful wastefulness of it. The man this girl has married has been trained, let us suppose, to earn a high wage. Now by his marriage contract he is compelled to put the money he has earned into the hands of an untrained person for spending. Is there a business man here that would turn over to an absolutely untrained buyer the funds which he expects to invest in wool, let us say, for his factory, in iron or in anything else? And yet that is what under present conditions of training we are expecting the man to do. How can any woman be expected to buy wisely, if it has never been suggested to her that there is such a thing as scientific buying, if she has never been trained in the principles of selection, substitution, co-operation, that is, if it has never been suggested to her that the household income has got to be used with the same kind of intelligence, care, knowledge that her husband uses funds in his business?

But there is another matter. Only those things are respected by us which we see respected. Now there is no question that to-day there is practically no respect for domestic service. That a complete and carefully devised system of training in the domestic industries would do an enormous amount to relieve the stigma that is upon this service, I, for one, believe. All my experience with intelligent women and girls tells me that there are hundreds and thousands of them who would be glad to do

this kind of work if it were an organized, respected trade which would have no more affect on their social positions than teaching, or stenography, or editing, or any other kind of work which women will do.

Not long ago I spent some time among the women in one of our great universities. One of its intelligent seniors in the group said to me in a burst of confidence one day, "I feel as if I had been wronged by my parents, by the educational system of this state and by society. I must earn my living and there is absolutely nothing for me to do but to teach, and I loathe it. I shall be a poor teacher and an unhappy teacher. What I could do and what I should love to do would be to be a cook. I consider it one of the most important, dignified and scientific occupations in the world. I could be as good a cook as so-and-so, who to-day is earning \$75 a month (more than I shall ever earn as a teacher). I feel it, but what would happen? It would break my mother's heart, my friends would drop me. I simply haven't the courage to be a pioneer. Nor could I with the present attitude among women towards those who serve in their kitchens do the work. They would not be willing to give me regular hours and the same kind of privileges that they agitate constantly in public and in private to compel factory managers and shop managers to give the girls that they employ. That is one of the most important employments in the world and it is demeaning when regarded as servile."