

Mem - Talk with Bigelow, August 27, 1929

See Bigelow about possible article on the Mental Health of College Girls - what's to be done about it. Go without any very clear idea. Tell him that my talk with college doctors and psychiatrists makes me feel that they are tackling the problem of the psychological condition of the girl when she comes into college, with sense, restraint and as much knowledge as is available. Show him the Martin letter. Tell him I haven't any clear idea in mind but that a proportion of girls enter college mentally unprepared:

(1) They may be moody, the fundamental reason being that they never have found anything which really interested them, and they never had any sense of responsibility towards anybody or anything awakened. Probably moodiness is the commonest form of selfishness.

(2) They may be unhappy. Much of this, in the judgment of the people I talked with, is due to unhappy relations of father and mother at home. In every college where this question has come up, divorce or alienation of the father and mother was stated as the reason for unhappy girls. Quote what Martin says on "crushes."

He asks several questions: Do I think that there are frequently instructors or professors who seduce girls. I told him, without mentioning the names, the case that Miss Comstock was wrestling with when I was at Radcliff, of a young instructor who had established abnormal relations with at least two students. It seemed to Miss C. to have been proved beyond doubt but the woman absolutely denied it. However, she was leaving.

Bigelow thinks the atheism of present instructors and

sometimes older professors, is the basis of a good deal of unhappiness. Tells of a Columbia man who told his classes that if they should go through his courses and come out still believing in God, he would believe that he had failed.

Told him my experience at the colleges was that there is a good deal of interest among the girls in religion.

Bigelow is interested in the discussion of co-education versus the independent college. Told him I think it depends a good deal on the girl. His daughters are at an Ohio independent college.

He wants to know what the practical application of it would be. Doesn't want an article, I take it, that is left hanging in the air - a general discussion, such as I am inclined to. I told him that points should be made that the colleges are getting girls unprepared at home, that the home responsibility is being shirked, that in many places - though I don't believe in all, by any means - the high schools give a training in recklessness and lawlessness. The girl, thinking she is sophisticated, finds herself by her manners, her crudeness of outlook, at a disadvantage beside the well-trained girl. This may react in intensifying recklessness or in a sense of inferiority.

The extension of wise mental direction, particularly helping the individual to study herself, look herself in the face, care always being taken to discourage over-discussion of herself with others.

Other points that should be studied in such a paper: There is the difficulty of a girl adjusting herself to her fellows - afraid of strangers. There is ignorance of sex.

Told him that I am too hazy about it to want a contract now. All I wanted to know was whether he would be sympathetic to such a study if I succeeded in making it. *He said yes.*