

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whittman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
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The Education of American Girls

Anna C. (Anna Callender) Brackett

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“The time has arrived, when like huntsmen, we should surround the cover, and look sharp that justice does not slip away and pass out of sight and get lost; for there can be no doubt that we are in the right direction. Only try and get a sight of her, and if you come within view first, let me know.” — Plato Rep. Book IV.



TO THE
SCHOOL-GIRLS AND COLLEGE-GIRLS
OF
AMERICA,
BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT THEIR IDEALS ARE HIGH AND
THAT
THEY HAVE STRENGTH TO MAKE THEM REAL,

This Book is Dedicated

BY THE
WOMEN WHO, IN THE INTERVALS SNATCHED FROM DAILY LABOR,
HAVE WRITTEN IT FOR THEIR SAKES.

PREFACE.

The Table of Contents sufficiently indicates the purpose and aim of this book. The essays are the thoughts of American women, of wide and varied experience, both professional and otherwise; no one writer being responsible for the work of another. The connecting link is the common interest. Some of the names need no introduction. The author of Essay IV. has had an unusually long and varied experience in the education and care of Western girls, in schools and colleges. The author of the essay on English Girls is a graduate of Antioch, has taught for many years in different sections of this country, and has had unusual opportunities, for several years, of observing English methods and results.

The essays on the first four institutions, whose names they bear, come with the official sanction of the presiding officers of those institutions, who vouch for the correctness of the statements. Of these, VII. is by a member of the present Senior Class of the University, who has instituted very exact personal inquiries among the women-students. The author of VIII. is the librarian of Mt. Holyoke Seminary. The writer of the report from [Pg 6] Oberlin is a graduate—a teacher of wide experience, and has been for three or four years the Principal of the Ladies' Department of the college. The resident physician at Vassar is too well known as such, to need any introduction.

There are many other institutions whose statistics would be equally valuable, such, for instance, as the Northwestern University of Illinois, which has not only opened its doors to girl-students, but has placed women on the Board of Trustees, and in the Faculty.

From Antioch, which we desired to have fully represented, we have been disappointed in obtaining statistics, which may, however, hereafter be embodied in a second edition. In place thereof, we give the brief statement of facts found under the name of the institution, supplied by a friend.

With reference to my own part of the volume, if the words on "Physical Education" far outnumber those on the "Culture of the Intellect," and the "Culture of the Will," it can only be said that the American nation are far more liable to overlook the former than the

latter two, and that the number of pages covered is by no means to be taken as an index of the relative importance of the divisions in themselves. Of the imperfection of all three, no one can be more conscious than their author. The subject is too large for any such partial treatment.

To friends, medical, clerical, and unprofessional, who [Pg 7] have kindly given me the benefit of their criticism on different parts of the introductory essay, my thanks are due. Especially do I recognize my obligation to Dr. W. Gill Wylie, of this city, whose line of study and practice has made his criticism of great value.

I cannot refrain from adding that I am fully aware of the one-sided nature of the training acquired in the profession of teaching. Civilization, implying, as it does, division of labor, necessarily renders all persons more or less one-sided. In the teaching profession, the voluntary holding of the mind for many hours of each day in the position required for the work of educating uneducated minds, the constant effort to state facts clearly, distinctly, and freed from unnecessary details, almost universally induce a straightforwardness of speech, which savors, to others who are not immature, of brusqueness and positiveness, if it may not deserve the harsher names of asperity and arrogance. It is not these in essence, though it appear to be so, and thus teachers often give offense and excite opposition when these results are farthest from their intention. In the case of these essays, this professional tendency may also have been aggravated by the circumstances under which they have been written, the only hours available for the purpose having been the last three evening hours of days whose freshness was claimed by actual teaching, and the morning hours of a short vacation.

I do not offer these explanations as an apology, simply [Pg 8] as an explanation. No apology has the power to make good a failure in courtesy. If passages failing in this be discovered, it will be cause for gratitude and not for offense if they are pointed out.

The spirit which has prompted the severe labor has been that which seeks for the Truth, and endeavors to express it, in hopes that more perfect statements may be elicited.

With these words, I submit the result to the intelligent women of America, asking only that the screen of the honest purpose may be

interposed between the reader and any glaring faults of manner or expression.

ANNA C. BRACKETT.

117 East 36th street, New York City,
January, 1874.

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**PUTNAMS HANDY BOOK
SERIES**

[Pg 11]

"Die Weltgeschichte ist der Fortschritt in das Bewusstseyn der Freiheit." —Hegel.

THE EDUCATION

OF

AMERICAN GIRLS.

“Who educates a woman, educates a race.”

the Education of American Girls.

There seems to be at present no subject more capable of exciting and holding attention among thoughtful people in America, than the question of the Education of Girls. We may answer it as we will, we may refuse to answer it, but it will not be postponed, and it will be heard; and until it is answered on more rational grounds than that of previous custom, or of preconceived opinion, it may be expected to present itself at every turn, to crop out of every stratum of civilized thought. Nor is woman to blame if the question of her education occupies so much attention. The demands made are not hers—the continual agitation is not primarily of her creating. It is simply the tendency of the age, of which it is only the index. It would be as much out of place to blame the weights of a clock for the moving of the hands, while, acted upon by an unseen, but constant force, they descend slowly but steadily towards the earth.

That this is true, is attested by the widely-spread discussion and the contemporaneous attempts at reform in widely-separated countries. While the women in America are striving for a more complete development of their powers, the English women are, in their own way, and quite independently, forcing their right at least to be examined if not to be taught, and the Russian women are [Pg 14] asserting that the one object toward which they will bend all their efforts of reform is “the securing of a solid education from the foundation up.” When the water in the Scotch lakes rises and falls, as the quay in Lisbon sinks, we know that the cause of both must lie far below, and be independent of either locality.

The agitation of itself is wearisome, but its existence proves that it must be quieted, and it can be so quieted only by a rational solution, for every irrational decision, being from its nature self-contradictory, has for its chief mission to destroy itself. As long as it continues, we may be sure that the true solution has not been attained, and for our hope we may remember that we

“have seen all winter long the thorn
First show itself intractable and fierce,
And after, bear the rose upon its top.”

We, however, are chiefly concerned with the education of our own girls, of girls in America. Born and bred in a continent separated by miles of ocean from the traditions of Europe, they may not unnaturally be expected to be of a peculiar type. They live under peculiar conditions of descent, of climate, of government, and are hence very different from their European sisters. No testimony is more concurrent than that of observant foreigners on this point. More nervous, more sensitive, more rapidly developed in thinking power, they scarcely need to be stimulated so much as restrained; while, born of mixed races, and reared in this grand meeting-ground of all nations, they gain at home, in some degree, that breadth which can be attained in other countries only by travel. Our girls are more frank in their manners, but we nowhere find girls so capable of teaching intrusion [Pg 15] and impertinence their proper places, and they combine the French nerve and force with the Teutonic simplicity and truthfulness. Less accustomed to leading-strings, they walk more firmly on their own feet, and, breathing in the universal spirit of free inquiry, they are less in danger of becoming unreasonable and capricious.

Such is the material, physical and mental, which we have to fashion into womanhood by means of education. But is it not manifest in the outset, that no system based on European life can be adequate to the solution of such a problem? Our American girls, if treated as it is perfectly correct to treat French or German girls, are thwarted and perverted into something which has all the faults of the German and French girl, without her excellencies. Our girls will not blindly

obey what seem to them arbitrary rules, and we can rule them only by winning their conviction. In other words, they will rule themselves, and it therefore behoves us to see that they are so educated that they shall do this wisely. They are not continually under the eye of a guardian. They are left to themselves to a degree which would be deemed in other countries impracticable and dangerous. We cannot follow them everywhere, and therefore, more than in any other country must we educate them, so that they will follow and rule themselves. But no platform of premise and conclusion, however logical and exact, is broad enough to place under an uneducated mind. Nothing deserving the name of conviction can have a place in such. Prejudices, notions, prescriptive rules, may exist there, but these are not sufficient as guides of conduct.

Education, of course, signifies, as a glance at the etymology of the word shows us, a development—an unfolding of innate capacities. In its process it is the gradual [Pg 16] transition from a state of entire dependence, as at birth, to a state of independence, as in adult life. Being a general term, it includes all the faculties of the human being, those of his mortal, and of his immortal part. It is a training, as well of the continually changing body, which he only borrows for temporary use from material nature, and whose final separation is its destruction, as of the changeless essence in which consists his identity, and which, from its very nature, is necessarily immortal. The education of a girl is properly said to be finished when the pupil has attained a completely fashioned will, which will know how to control and direct her among the exigencies of life, mental power to judge and care for herself in every way, and a perfectly developed body. However true it may be, that life itself, by means of daily exigencies, will shape the Will into habits, will develop to some extent the intelligence, and that the forces of nature will fashion the body into maturity; we apply the term Education only to the voluntary training of one human being who is undeveloped, by another who is developed, and it is in this sense alone that the process can concern us. For convenience, then, the subject will be considered under three main heads, corresponding to the triple statement made above.

Especially is it desirable to place all that one may have to say of the education of girls in America on some proved, rational basis, for

in no country is the work of education carried on in so purely empirical a way. We are deeply impressed with its necessity; we are eager in our efforts, but we are always in the condition of one "whom too great eagerness bewilders." We are ready to drift in any direction on the subject. We adopt every new idea that presents itself. We recognize our errors [Pg 17] in one direction, and in our efforts to prevent those we fall into quite as dangerous ones on the other side. More than in any other country, then, it were well for us to follow in the paths already laid out by the thinkers of Germany. I shall, therefore, make no apology for using as guide the main divisions of the great philosophers of that nation, who alone, in modern times, have made for Education a place among the sciences. Truth is of no country, but belongs to whoever can comprehend it.

Nor do I apologize for speaking of what may be called small things nor for dealing with minor details. "When the fame of Heraclitus was celebrated throughout Greece, there were certain persons that had a curiosity to see so great a man. They came, and as it happened, found him warming himself in a kitchen. The meanness of the place occasioned them to stop, upon which the philosopher thus accosted them: 'Enter,' said he, 'boldly, for here too there are gods!'" Following so ancient and wise an authority, I also say to myself in speaking of these things which seem small and mean: Enter boldly, for here too there are gods; nay, perchance we shall thereby enter the very temple of the goddess Hygeia herself. [Pg 18]

PHYSICAL EDUCATION,
OR,
THE CULTURE OF THE BODY.

“Hæante exitium primis dant signa diebus.” – Virgil.

“Now my belief is—and this is a matter upon which I should like to have your opinion, but my own belief is—not that the good body improves the soul, but that the good soul improves the body. What do you say?” – Plato, Rep. Book III.

If we could literally translate the German word *Fertigkeiten* into Readinesses, and use it as a good English word, we should then have a term under which to group many arts of which a fully educated woman should have some knowledge—I mean cooking, sewing, sweeping, dusting, etc. When a woman is mistress of these, she is called *capable*, that good old word, heard oftener in New England than elsewhere, which carries with it a sweet savor of comfort and rest. Some knowledge of these should undoubtedly constitute a part of the education of our girls; but the “how much” is a quantity which varies very materially as the years go by. For instance, the art of knitting stockings was considered in the days of our grandmothers one to which much time must be devoted, and those of us who were born in New England doubtless well recollect the time when, to the music of the tall old kitchen clock, we slowly, laboriously and yet triumphantly, “bound off” our first heel, or “narrowed off” our first toe. [Pg 19]

But weaving machines can do this work now with far greater precision; and while stockings are so good and so cheap, is it worth while for our girls to spend long hours in the slow process of looping stitches into each other? Would not the same time be better spent in the open air and the sunshine, than in-doors, with cramped fingers and bent back over the knitting-needles?

Of Sewing, nearly the same might be said, since the invention of machines for the purpose. Sewing is a fine art, and those of us who can boast of being neat seamstresses do confess to a certain degree of pride in the boast. But the satisfaction arises from the well-doing, and not from the fact that it is Sewing well done; for anything well and thoroughly done, even if it be only boot-blackening on a street corner, or throwing paper torpedoes in a theatre orchestra to imitate the crack of a whip in the "Postilion Galop," gives to its doer the same sense of self-satisfaction. It would be folly now, as it may have been in old times, for our girls to spend their hours and try their eyes over back-stitching for collars, etc., when any one out of a hundred cheap machines can do it not only in less time but far better, and the money which could be saved in many ways, by wisdom in housekeeping and caring for the health of children, would buy a machine for every family. This matter of stitching being done for us, then, we may say that the other varieties of sewing required are very few: "sewing over-and-over," or "top-stitching" as the Irish call it, hemming, button sewing, button-hole making, and gathering. Indeed, hemming, including felling, might be also omitted, as, with a very few exceptions, hems and fells are also handed over to the rapid machine; and "over-casting" is but a variety of "top-stitching." There [Pg 20] are then only four things which a girl really needs to be taught to do, so far as the mere manual facility goes—"to sew over-and-over;" to put on a button; to gather, including "stroking" or "laying," and to make a button-hole. Does it not seem as if an intelligent girl of fourteen or fifteen could be taught these in twelve lessons of one hour each? Only practice can give rapidity and perfection; but at the age mentioned, the girl's hand has been pretty thoroughly educated to obey her will, and but very little time is needed to turn the acquired control into this peculiar activity, while, with the untrained muscles of the little child, much more time is required and much fretfulness engendered, born of the confined position and the almost insuperable difficulty of the achievement.

Above the mere manual labor, however, there comes another work which always has to be done for the child, and is therefore of no educational value for her: I mean the "fitting" and "basting." They cannot be intrusted to the child, for the simple reason that they