

# The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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## THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

(Extracts from a Paper read at the Secondary Schools Conference, Wellington, by Miss Nancy Jobson, M.A.)

(Concluded.)

The scientific inheritance is evidently the first upon which the child can enter, because she immediately comes into contact with the scientific facts in the world around her. Therefore the scientific is the first form her education most readily takes, but therewith should go some part of the aesthetic inheritance which so many fail to receive. In childhood at least the child learns science from the observation of Nature, and therein lies beauty. Surely the marvel and the glory of the universe, the wonder of the heavens, the loveliness and the perfection of a flower, the splendour of a sunset, the unfolding of green leaves in Spring, the sound of many waters, the music of the wind in the trees are all parts of her aesthetic as well as of her scientific inheritance. Let us keep about the girl the heaven which lies about her in her infancy; let us prevent the shades of the prison house from too soon closing in upon her; let us teach her from her earliest days to see the beauty of Nature around her, so that in the years to come she may, like Antaeus of old, find new strength and unfailing refreshment in her contact with Mother Earth. Therewith she will find some of her moral and religious inheritance, for the hand of God will be in everything, and some part of her literary and artistic inheritance

will also come to her: in the nature myths of Greece; in poetry, story and legend; in the reproduction of the statues of the Greeks; in good pictures drawn from various sources—and thus simply these elements are interwoven, and thus begins the child's education.

As the child advances, the various branches of Science are to be gradually taken up. Of these, Botany, Astronomy (studied, of course, with a telescope), Physiology, and Geology are more adapted to girls' requirements than Physics and Chemistry, save Household Chemistry, but some knowledge of all is desirable. The work in all these subjects must be as practical as possible, and not encumbered with too many technical terms or other stumbling blocks.

Home Science should be part of the work of every Secondary School, and should be taken by the majority of the pupils, though Commercial and other Technical Courses may be relegated to the Technical Colleges. Though the Domestic Course should not be begun till the third year, First Aid and Health lessons should be given in both Primary and Secondary Schools. These should consist first of all of simple instruction in the primary laws of health, especially those engendering love of fresh air and personal cleanliness, with the hatred of dirt in any shape or form. In the Secondary School these Health lessons should be specially adapted to the requirements of the adolescent girl, and should not be given by any member of the school staff, but by some wise and capable mother or

woman doctor who well understands girlhood nature and girlhood needs. With the Domestic Course should be continued at least English and History, and to the ordinary branches of Domestic instruction should be added training in the care of children and in home furnishing, with special attention to choice and harmony of colours. Emphasis should be laid upon thrift and the principles of true economy—upon everything, indeed, that will make the home beautiful and a joy for ever to its inmates—the best and the most attractive spot on earth.

The chief part of the literary inheritance must certainly be English, and one of the chief aims of every teacher should be to instil into her pupils the love of good literature as of the highest in all the other arts. In the Primary School a satisfactory mastery of simple grammatical principles and technicalities of composition should be gained, together with some knowledge of English literature. In the higher forms of the Secondary Schools I would suggest the inclusion among our text-books of some of the excellent translations of Greek plays, both tragedy and comedy. This branch of literature would open up fresh avenues of thought and culture, and produce a less blurred mental picture of the wonderful civilisation and literary achievements of the Greeks, bringing home to us in these latter self-satisfied days the greatness of the debt we owe to that enlightened and cultured people whose language is now cast into the outer darkness, where none the less its beauty can never pass into nothingness.