

# The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

Vol. 23.—No. 265.

WELLINGTON, N.Z., JULY 18, 1917.

2s 6d Per Annum, Post Free.  
Single Copy, 3d.

## SEX DIFFERENTIATION IN EDUCATION.

(To the Editor.)

Madam,—Your leader in the June number of the "White Ribbon" and Mrs Field's letter immediately following it, are both worthy of careful consideration, as containing much that will appeal to every thinking woman. Yet there is one fact that seems to be overlooked in pleading for differentiation on the ground of ability, not sex; and that is that, in spite of all our theories, we cannot alter the indisputable fact that there is a difference between the man and the woman as to nature and function, and so there is logical ground for a certain amount of differentiation in education. For is not the purpose of education to train and develop the latent powers of the child and make it the most capable of fulfilling worthily its special function, whatever that may be? And if there is a difference in function, there must necessarily be a difference in the ideal education, which must surely be that best adapted to prepare each for the fulfilment of its special function. I grant that intellectually the same training is suitable for both sexes, but that does not cover the whole ground. Unfortunately, it is that which to many people bulks most largely, together with the desire to provide the child with a livelihood-making vocation. It is not so much identity of education as equality of opportunity for all-round development that we should aim at. It is not altogether to be wondered at—this tendency to go back in some degree to the ideals of fifty or sixty

years ago; for the struggle to obtain for girls an intellectual education similar to that given to boys—a struggle the success of which no sensible woman can regret—has led to other sides of the ideal education being more or less neglected. It is ever thus that human progress is made—not by the steady unswerving unbroken advance of the lava stream down the mountain slope, but by the ceaseless alternation of the forward and backward movement of the incoming tide. I do not therefore believe that we shall go back to the educational methods of the early Victorian period, as some seem to fear, but that before long the ideals that are seeking realisation through the increased prominence of such subjects as Home Science, will be acknowledged as of equal importance with those aimed at in the training of the purely intellectual subjects, and both groups will find thus their true balance. Furthermore, the scope of Home Science has widened greatly; it is very different now from what it was some years ago, and it may well be that Home Science will be found, when better understood and fully developed, to provide for the training of the intellect and reasoning powers, as well as do the present methods of studying Language or Mathematics, besides doing much for the social and home-loving side of a girl's nature. It is strange, and one might almost say pathetic, that a Society that has for its object the protection and welfare of women and children, should set itself in opposition to a movement that is really seeking so to improve the condition and the spirit of the home as to reduce the

necessity for such a society. When the true aims of the Council of Education are better understood—and the proposal of the University Senate is only another indication of the same movement, even though it may not be directly connected with the action of the Council—it will be seen, I think, that much of the criticism levelled at their suggestions is unnecessary, and is the result of a failure to take a sufficiently broad view of the matter. I trust that the subject will be still further ventilated in these columns, for the more it is discussed, the better we shall be able to understand and appreciate its value and importance.—I am, etc.,

KATE M. EVANS.

Where experts differ, Councils of Education and Teachers' Institutes are not in agreement, is it any wonder that members of the "White Ribbon" staff see things from a different viewpoint. We are pleased indeed to have a letter from Mrs Evans, as she is a recognised expert on this subject. We entirely agree with our colleague that "the purpose of education is to train and develop the latent powers of the child," and where a girl shows a talent or bent for Home Science, then train her and send her out as an expert. Raise the standard of domestic work; let the girl who qualifies in Home Science be honoured as much as one who qualifies in any other science. Send out those trained workers as we send our Plunket nurses to give aid and help in any home requiring them, so many hours a week or a day as required, and let there be no loss of caste to these workers. The loss of