

CO-EDUCATION IN COLLEGE

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THERE is an increasing tendency to use the word "Education" in reference only to scholastic training, which may or may not be the best "bringing up" a person can receive. Thomas Jesse Jones in his little book "The Four Essentials of Education" defines the term as "preparation for life". With this definition in mind one can understand what is meant when it is said of a man who has attended school very little, "He has had no education". The speaker is consciously or unconsciously applying Jones' idea of education; he means that the man has come face to face with life, its hardships and its trials, without preparation of any kind. Now, however, it is a common question whether the ancient and respected seats of learning, of "higher education", are in reality places where one is prepared for life, or simply places where one obtains a degree for attending so many classes and writing so many examinations while the real business of the institution is to provide sport and pleasure for the inmates and to render them as totally unfit for life as is possible.

In the opinion of many of these doubters, the most important cause of what they consider to be the growing laxness of colleges to fulfil their purpose and their alarming tendency to become social centres rather than scholastic oases, has been the adoption of co-education. They may be right in both opinions, as to the deterioration of the colleges and as to the reason for this decay, but they do not seem to be generally supported. To be sure, many colleges have rejected the idea of co-education and these include the most celebrated and oldest educational centres. The reason for this has been largely a desire to cling to old customs and a disinclination to change, rather than a fear that women would lower the standard of either morality or scholarship.

The whole question of higher education for women is under constant discussion—not merely co-education but the value of a college education in any circumstances. Many people who are broadminded and liberal in most matters feel that girls should spend the time which they "waste" at college in learning the practical details of housekeeping. To them a higher education is a means to an end, not an end in itself; it is simply a qualification for demanding a little larger salary than is given to a person who is not

college-bred. In their opinion a girl has absolutely wasted four years if she marries soon after she graduates. They feel that she has not received any financial returns nor has she acquired any knowledge of household duties. They do not seem to realize that few girls now stay at home after leaving high school, that if a girl does not go to college she usually teaches or works as a stenographer, and so gains just as little knowledge of the workings of the household as if she were studying and receiving mental stimulus.

Nor should the importance of this broadening of interests be underrated. Although many girls do turn their courses to financial profit for a time, the majority hope to marry, bear children and make a home, the real object of woman's creation. The home, where many people consider the results of a college course utterly useless, is the place where they yield the greatest returns. None but women can be mothers and motherhood is an occupation in itself as fatherhood is not. The whole future of the race depends more upon motherhood than upon fatherhood. Men must go out and earn the living for the family, and in so doing they are constantly meeting a variety of people and gaining new interests. Some women are able to carry on another career along with motherhood, but these are few; the great majority have to stay at home and care for the children and make a home for the husband. Consequently, they are associated with details, and life will ask of them an emotional and practical expenditure of energy; and, without discounting the worth of these things, they will not find in them an intellectual stimulus. Therefore a woman needs all the breadth and activity of interest that a college course can give her.

As well as making her own life more enjoyable and providing a profitable way of spending unemployed hours, a higher education enables a woman to be a more interesting and interested companion for her husband. It is an undeniable fact that college-bred women are much harder to please in the matter of selecting a husband than they would otherwise be. The fact that a man is a man does not overwhelm them with awe. After working side by side with men for four years, after competing with them for medals and prizes, after being made to realize that men's brains are not superior to those of members of their own sex, women graduates naturally consider a prospective husband's intellectual capacity and his virtues and vices more carefully and sensibly than if they were swept off their feet by the mere fact that he is a man. Their own minds have broadened and their judgment has become more critical, so that a man who pleases one of them and arouses both love and respect must be superior to the great mass of men. Training in

college clubs, societies and athletics, and the knowledge that she can support herself if necessary, give a woman more executive ability and make it unnecessary for her to hunt a husband as the one and only means of livelihood. This drawback of being hard to please has relative compensations. When a well-educated woman marries, she comes to her husband with a brain well-stored and active; she does not merely sympathize blindly with him in his troubles and difficulties but she understands them and is often able to give him material assistance. Moreover, her college career has not changed her from a woman to a pedant as it did many of the women who were first received into men's colleges. At present a college girl compares favourably with girls outside, in the opinion even of men who are not erudite. Her education is actually a social asset. She remains a girl with a girl's outlook in spite of going to college. She has all the truly womanly qualities which her ancestors had, and besides she has lost many of those peculiarities which are wholly undesirable—inefficiency except in household matters, narrow mental development and customary unthinking submission to her husband. As a matter of fact she has become a friend and comrade as well as an object of romantic love.

Another important consideration is a college woman's ability to earn money for herself and her family in case of her husband's disablement or death. Although a girl may marry almost as soon as she graduates, there is no pledge that she will not be called upon at some time in the future to support herself and perhaps others. When such an occasion arises, a woman who has a college education almost invariably becomes a teacher. In many boarding schools no normal school diploma is required if one has a college degree, and in such schools, women are usually preferred to girls as teachers. Thus a position in pleasant surroundings, entailing work which is neither unbecoming nor fatiguing, and bringing a reasonable amount of money, is available to most college-bred women who must look after themselves in middle life. This benefit derived from higher education ought not to be overlooked, as thousands of women are placed in this position each year because of the large number of sudden deaths and accidents which occur.

There seems to be little question, then, that a higher education benefits women themselves and consequently the whole world. It helps to make more efficient, more intellectual mothers and so a better race.

The next point to be considered is whether men and women should be segregated while they are acquiring this knowledge, while

they are being exposed to this education. The question of the advisability of co-education will always be debatable as it will always be good for some and harmful for others. Undoubtedly some girls develop better when they are brought into less constant contact with boys and so, while I do believe that co-education is a very good system and that it is likely to remain because it is characteristic of the friendly and intimate relations of the two sexes on this continent, I do not consider it to be the only system.

One very strong argument in favour of co-education is its economic advantage. Formerly only members of the wealthy leisure class aspired to a college education, people who could and did pay high prices for the social advantages and amusements the college offered. Now, when people of every class and in every financial condition are seeking a college education, when many boys and girls are "putting themselves through" college, it is essential that every effort be made to reduce expenses to that minimum which still enables the college to provide first class instruction and accommodation. Co-education has this very effect. Whether a college is large or small, in its management certain primary expenses are incurred such as the salaries of the president, the bursar and the registrar, the upkeep of the buildings, the advertising and such fixed overhead. There are, to be sure, other expenses which are not fixed, but these are proportionate to the number of students. An example of this is the salaries paid to professors, whose number must increase in proportion to the increase in the student body. Co-education, by materially increasing the number of students, tends to lower the proportion of fixed overhead expense chargeable to each person and, at the same time, does not increase the per capita charge for variable overhead. Accordingly, this influx of women must have one of four effects. It must lower the fees per capita, provide money to pay more liberal salaries to the professors, increase the profit of the college, or decrease its loss. Any of these results would be advantageous and, therefore, co-education is of economic value.

Most girls, moreover, derive a great deal of benefit from the deep, lasting friendships which they form with boys at college and from the new point of view they acquire through discussion in mixed classes. Men and women differ so in their whole outlook on life that an exchange of opinions on even the most trivial cut-and-dried topics cannot be other than educational, because of the new fields of thought that are almost certain to be opened. Every new way of regarding a matter, every bit of new information and every different opinion, whether right or wrong, is something

additional to think about and either starts a new train of thought or continues an old one. In a woman's college, although everyone does not think exactly the same thoughts, yet it is a natural impossibility for women to take the same view as men, and consequently much of the stimulus which results from friction is lost. Under these conditions, opinions tend to become rather narrow and rigid and a graduate of a women's college is apt to lack much of the sympathy, understanding and breath of mind which characterize a "co-ed", although she is in these respects usually superior to a woman who is not college-bred and therefore cannot understand a totally new mental attitude. Circumstances alter cases, however, and it is natural that a clever office girl should make a suitable and sympathetic wife for a business man, that she should possess for him the very qualities which have just been cited as the attributes of a college woman.

Another advantage of co-education is the opportunity it affords men and women to know one another in quite unromantic circumstances, in the regular routine of classes and under the stress of examinations. Such an intimate knowledge of men's character and temperament must be helpful to a woman. Even though she is very much in love, she will realize by reason of her constant association with men that none of them is perfect, that they are to be loved and respected in spite of their weaknesses, not because they have none. As a result, marriage will be less of a disillusionment and disappointment and more of a true, deep, permanent, unselfish compact.

These arguments in favor of co-education have been an attempt to prove that such a training fits women to be better and happier mothers and wives than they would otherwise be. Much has been said about the close friendships which are formed at college and about the knowledge of masculine temperament that is acquired. This very familiarity, and the large amount of time which men and women spend together outside of classes, are the main objections to co-education raised by critics. It is their opinion that if men and women were at separate colleges there would be fewer distractions for both, that much more time would be spent in reading and studying—the real business of a college course—and that as a result, the standard of scholarship would be considerably higher. They do not deny that there are certain advantages to be derived from collegiate social life but they consider that the scholastic disadvantages outweigh the social advantages. In a few cases girls come to college for the pleasure to be had, and that of course, means that they do not profit as much by their training as they should

Because these "co-eds" are the most conspicuous and make the most noise, they seem to predominate and the world judges by them. Yet even these social butterflies must acquire some knowledge which will furnish them with intellectual interests in later life. The life of gaiety can be overdone and this is often the case, but to remedy this fault the whole system of co-education need not be abolished. "Shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious"? All its many benefits need not be sacrificed because of difficulties which could be met and dealt with in a much less drastic way. University students are becoming younger and younger but nevertheless, in order to be modern and in order to satisfy the popular demand for freedom from restraint, the rules in women's residences have become less stringent than they used to be. This is only right, as over-strict regulations tend to produce and encourage deceitfulness and disobedience. On the other hand, too lenient regulations result in idleness, late hours and a general feeling of rivalry which is a very bad influence. If the girls in a residence were allowed to go out only two nights a week besides Sunday, they would still share the "college life", which many people consider the most important part of a college course, but they would do more work and be in better physical condition. Theoretically those who come to college are old enough to know what is best for themselves, but this is seldom the case. Those who come from homes where they have been restricted in the matter of evening pleasures, are carried away by a sense of their freedom from restraint; those who have been accustomed to going out a great deal at night, simply follow their old habits. As a result, the generosity and breadth of mind which permits such mild restrictions is ill-rewarded, and privileges are abused. It would be better for the scholastic standard of the college and for the health of the girls if more stringent rules were imposed and carried out. This reform could be effected without such a drastic measure as the abolition of co-education. To be sure social activity must be checked in a college where men and women are together, but this can be done effectively without depriving the members of either sex of the stimulating presence of the other.

Other reformers, whose opinions are diametrically opposed to those of which mention has been made, suggest that classes should be held separately but that there be a mixed social life in the institution. To do away with a mixed assembly in either of these important phases of higher education would be to commit a blunder. Men and women must mingle in both work and pleasure in the world, so it is best for them to start at once, always provided that they do

not go to extremes. As has already been pointed out, much of the real value of a college course comes from the interchange of ideas between the sexes, and this privilege would be lost if classes were held separately. For the most part, however, those who are dissatisfied with the present system of co-education are opposed to the excess of social activity as militating against intellectual achievement, rather than to any effect which it has had on scholarship through mixed classes.

One recognized benefit of co-education is the moral improvement made in the colleges. This is the inevitable result of introducing women into the society of a group of men. In spite of the modern cries of women for the vote and equality of rights, and in spite of their assertion of their ability to compete with men in every sphere of business, they still expect a certain deference from men which they will always receive, although it seems incongruous with the emancipation of women in the twentieth century. Surely if women are ready to wrest positions and rewards from men, it would be only sporting to be prepared to meet them on their own ground in every way without expecting any advantages granted out of chivalry. But such is not the case. Men have an innate respect for the purity of women and they demonstrate it by raising their own moral standards when there are women in the company. Swearing, drinking and other vices are less prevalent in co-educational colleges than elsewhere, in spite of the opinion of crabbed faultfinders that men to-day have a greater right than ever to indulge these vices because, instead of being restrained by the influence of the women, they are now accompanied by them. "Forbidden fruit is sweetest", and when boys and girls are constantly together, side by side during the daily routine, they are not nearly so apt to become foolishly infatuated with one another as if all communication were forbidden. In this respect women's colleges are at a disadvantage. The students are kept strictly apart from all male company and, whereas "co-eds" are "held tight by being given plenty of rope", these others are likely to be somewhat irresponsible until they become used to their freedom after graduation. Women, when left entirely in the company of their own kind, are inclined to forget that they are objects of respectful awe and of reverence, that they are supposed to epitomise all the virtues, and as a result, they fail to live up to the high moral standard expected of them. By their constant contact with men who are respectful as well as friendly and companionable, the women of a co-educational college are reminded of their position and they strive to be worthy of it.

Often those who best realize the value of co-education, in fact those who are really most deeply concerned with the improvement and permanency of the system, are very dissatisfied with the existing curriculum. They realize that the course was planned for men and with frequent misgivings they ask, "Can women be educated by a system devised for men"? Men and women are so different biologically and their futures are so different that many people think that the same course cannot possibly suit them both. That it benefits both alike is then the beauty of the arts course. Its whole object is to prepare one for life, not for any particular phase of life or for any certain profession, but for life in its widest sense. The proof of the general advantages to be derived from these four years, which are devoted to giving one wider and better interests in order that life may hold more of value and of meaning, is the advice which is given to men entering any profession, "Take an arts course. You will find it of great value although just now you may not see how it will help you". The course is not planned with the mere object of fitting people to earn a living, but also of enabling them to win from life the best that it can give. It does not profess to instruct students fully in any subject; its object is to make suggestions, to arouse enthusiasm, and to display new vistas of learning. Sir Maxwell Garnett has expressed his opinion of the aim of education in the following sentence, "The main business of all education is to form, in the mind of every person, a single, wide interest, centred in a supreme purpose". It has been pointed out by a commentator that Sir Maxwell means by "single wide interest", the development of one's self, but always correlatively with the development of the selves of other persons. Surely this effect can be produced on women as well as on men; surely work that offers so many choices through such a wide range, must suit brains that are entirely different. What can be the objection to a course for women in which they gain an elementary knowledge of subjects which benefit everyone, in which they have a wide field from which to choose pursuits suitable to their individual taste, in which they are prepared for the full, free life! There are certain influences which are advantageous and beneficial to everyone and of such a nature are the influences of a liberating arts course.

Dissatisfaction with the existing curriculum, however, may be entirely justified. While recognizing the value of the present course, it is yet possible to realize that there is room for improvement. If this is the case, the criticism comes as much from the men as from the women except in the case of one or two subjects,

such as Physics and Economics of which I shall make mention later. There is an open question as to whether or not certain subjects should, of necessity, be included in the courses of persons to whom they are highly distasteful or even incomprehensible. Should a man with a mathematical brain be compelled to study Latin, or should a woman of classical turn be forced to work problems and perform experiments? This is just an example of the questions which arise during a discussion of what a college curriculum should or should not be. The advisability of compulsory Latin, Mathematics and Science for men and women who do not care for these subjects, would be established if it could be proved that they assist in the general broadening process which a student undergoes, but, on the other hand, if it could be proved that the time spent on these classes is wasted, except in so far as the memory is trained to repeat intelligently certain words and formulae memorized from a text-book, their uselessness would be equally certain. This question has not yet been settled although it has caused much discussion, but the present feeling is in favour of certain compulsory classes. This problem is one that concerns the whole field of higher education; it is not a problem arising from the co-educational system. The subjects which are sufficiently general and sufficiently necessary to be compulsory for all men students are also sufficiently important to warrant attention from the women.

Two classes have been mentioned in which a practical reform has been suggested; these are Physics and Economics. Under present conditions, these two subjects are taught with a view to preparing a man for a professional or business career. Physics I conveys little meaning to women or men who are not continuing the study of the subject, although it is a profitable and absorbing class for those who can understand it. A suggestion has been made which, if carried out, might remedy this difficulty. Physics could be taught for an entirely different purpose, a purpose which would make it interesting and comprehensible for women, a purpose which would be profitable both materially and intellectually. This would be the study of Physics in relation to the home. I have the word of a professor of Physics that such a class is conceivable and, in fact, quite probable, and that it would be more educational for the average women than the present pre-medical and pre-dental courses. Undoubtedly it would be a more readily understood and more interesting class than the present one, and it would serve the same purpose in explaining the elementary principles and laws of the science of Physics. Such a class could be made an alternative to the present course in Physics, and in this way there

would be an opportunity for students to acquire an understanding and liking of one phase of a subject which might otherwise have been unintelligible and consequently highly distasteful. This same reform might well be applied to the study of Economics, although in this case it would be rather an effort to increase the benefit derived from the class than an endeavour to make it intelligible. A working knowledge of Economics is something which everyone should have and, therefore, under the present system, it is my opinion that Economics should be compulsory. Nevertheless, some people might receive more benefit from an intensive study of an interesting phase of the subject, after the first general principles had been grasped, than from such a general study as the course now comprises. An almost indispensable study for girls is that of home economics, which is defined as the art of feeding, clothing, housing and training the human race in so far as these activities are confined to the home. Home-making becomes the life work of at least seventy per cent of the women in the world, but generally there is a period between graduation from school or college and marriage when these women must earn a living. Girls, therefore, must be trained for two vocations and home economics suits both problems. A class in this subject might be offered as an option to Economics 1. The basic theories would be the same, a thorough understanding of a certain phase would be more profitable than an uncertain acquaintance with a more general aspect of the subject and, besides, the liberating value of the class would be as real as before. Girls would not be compelled to take a special class such as has been mentioned. Those who could understand the broad study of the subject and who preferred to take the class which would be of use in the business world rather than that which would be helpful in the home, would be at liberty to do so. The new courses would exist as an option, to provide that no person should leave college without an intelligent conception of the basic theories of Physics and of Economics or without a knowledge of the practical application of what she had learned.

As time passes, the system of co-education will be altered and improved as everything new is altered and improved, but the prevailing opinion is that co-education on the American continent is so much in keeping with the national intimacy of men and women that it will keep a permanent place in educational systems here. The whole question will doubtless continue for many years to be the cause of much discussion, just as the value of a higher education for women still gives rise to enthusiastic debate, although the general feeling on the latter point has been clearly demonstrated by the

increasing numbers of women who are to-day taking advantage of all educational facilities. In all probability co-education will prove its worth in exactly the same way, by the growing masses of women who will seek a higher education at a co-educational college rather than at a women's college.

It is a subject of much debate whether average people should be allowed to attend college. If average people through the college course, are lifted above being average, then it is better for the world. The world will progress only as individuals are raised higher. The average man cannot be sacrificed to the exceptional man. Everything in co-education is in accordance with the natural desires and instincts of the average man and woman; it provides companionship, an opportunity to learn, to understand each other's point of view and the stimulus of new, interfused ideas. Many improvements in the system are possible and are, of course, desirable, but the principle of co-education is a sound one and its advantages and good results will be apparent in that generation of which women bred in co-educational colleges will be the mothers.