

EDUCATION  
OF  
GIRLS AND WOMEN  
IN GREAT BRITAIN

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BY  
*C. S. BREMNER*

WITH A PREFACE BY MISS E. P. HUGHES.



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## PREFACE

IN tracing the history of any movement, the rate of development at different periods varies strikingly. There may be no growth for a long time ; occasionally the tide of progress may appear even to flow back ; the spirit of a great reform dies out, and the customs and traditions which have grown up around that reform become a dead weight to hamper progress. Then faint signs of life are to be seen by those who are on the watch, half-hearted protests against traditions, here and there revolts quickly quelled, and some discontent. These are promises of future life and vigour. Suddenly the scene is changed, or rather, it appears to be sudden to the casual observer ; it is but the ending of a series of events to those who have watched carefully. We have an outburst of Utopian schemes, many brave beginnings, and many failures. All seems chaos for the time being ; currents cross and re-cross ; the eternal struggle between the conservative element and the progressive element in humanity is intensified. Gradually out of disorder comes order and rest. But the world is not as it was : the trend of progress is altered ; new forces have probably come into operation.

What is true of other aspects of history, is true also of the educational aspect. The latter half of this

century has seen great changes, some of them revolutionary, in the education of the British people. It has also seen the beginning of still greater changes. Fifty years ago there was much stagnation. To-day there is much life, some bewilderment, and what appears to many to be an ever-increasing chaos. A large number of educational problems are being formulated, and many of them must, from the necessity of the case, be solved quickly, either badly, indifferently, or well. Time will possibly provide a solution for some of them without our actual interference; but the majority require careful thought and conscious effort, if they are to be solved satisfactorily. A wide knowledge of the educational state of the country, together with some knowledge of that which preceded the present state of affairs, will be of great use in such a momentous period as the present. Miss Bremner has given us a valuable contribution towards such knowledge, for which she deserves the gratitude of all those whose responsible duty it will be to mould the future of our educational development. Only those who have for some special purpose attempted to collect information on the state of education in Great Britain can appreciate the time, care, and patience which the writing of such a book as this entails.

Change has been visible in every sphere of education; it has been most strongly marked in the Secondary Education of girls and women. In Elementary Education, both in the immediate past and in the present, there has been no considerable difference between the education of girls and that of boys, nor between the education of men and women teachers. In Secondary Education, the difference in both spheres has been very

marked in the past, and is still considerable ; as a result, there is probably less contact between the men and women teachers engaged in Secondary Education than between those engaged in Elementary Education. Partly as a result of this isolation, the development of Secondary Education for girls in England has been of a somewhat special kind, and has special interest for those who are studying the subject. Lately an increasing number of foreigners have visited England for the purpose of seeing our educational establishments. The foreigner who comes to study English education deserves our pity. Many are the difficulties which lie before him. In Elementary Education he has to comprehend two different schemes working concurrently all over the kingdom, Voluntary and Board schools. When he has surmounted this difficulty, and enters the field of Secondary Education, despair may well seize both his instructor and himself. Many secondary teachers in England know little of the educational life outside their own special sphere. What does a High School mistress usually know of the education given at this present moment at Winchester? How far can an assistant master from one of our great public schools describe accurately how life goes on in one of our private commercial schools? It is very difficult for the intelligent foreigner to get information, and even difficult to see the real connection between the facts which he collects. Thanks to this book, a foreigner can for the future obtain easily some insight into the education of girls and women in Britain.

It has been said, with much truth, that the members of a civilized community are so closely linked to one

another that no section can progress safely far beyond the rest of the community. In other words, it seems to be true that safe and permanent progress is only possible when the rear guard and the advance guard are connected by intermediate sections, all in touch one with the other. If this be true, the education of the less educated half of the nation, girls and women, must have a special interest. If the pace of the rear guard affects the pace of the advance guard, it is everybody's interest to see that the pace of the rear guard be quickened. To attain this end, it might be well worth while to divide the ancient educational endowments, at one time enjoyed by boys only, between boys and girls. If we are believers in that greatest of educators, the life of the home, it is better to spend a little less money on boys' education, and help the girls, rather than doom the boys to live in homes governed by badly educated mothers and wives. The education of girls is not merely a woman's question—thoughtful men have never so regarded it. It is a human question, one that concerns every one. This book, although it deals only with the education of girls and women, should therefore be studied by all those who are interested in education.

Just at the present moment Secondary Education in England requires more consideration than Elementary Education: the latter is organized, the former is not. It is a truism that organization gives enormous power. A constant, wide, ever-deepening stream of state-aid and rate-aid is passing to the latter; only a tiny streamlet to the former. Already it is not an uncommon sight to come across an elementary school in better buildings, and better equipped, than a secondary school in the

same town. We are so accustomed to the fact that our Education Department only concerns itself with Elementary Education, that we may fail to realize how Secondary Education is affected by it. To many of us it is a fact of the profoundest significance that political enfranchisement has come to the working-man in England before educational enfranchisement, and the educational results for the time being may be serious. Can we expect the average man who has never enjoyed the benefits of Secondary Education, to realize its enormous value to the nation? It is difficult at present to show its value, because our Secondary Education has been largely a class education, and as such, its national value cannot easily be demonstrated to a democracy. When Secondary Education is given in England to those clever boys and girls from our elementary schools, who can really utilise it, it will then be comparatively easy to show its national importance; but until that time it is placed at a serious disadvantage. Yet it is obviously of the greatest importance to protect most carefully our secondary schools and universities. They are the depositories of the traditions, the culture, and the learning of the past, and are therefore of unique importance. But in order to protect wisely we must understand, and know something about, Secondary Education. This work on the education of girls and women is of considerable value, in that it gives us a fairly complete picture of a part of the Secondary Education of the British Isles.

Every country has, no doubt, its special contribution to make to the education of the world. The British Empire, with its enormous colonies and dependencies

in every continent and in every climate, with their widely-different forms of government, has probably for its special educational mission to keep awake a healthy dread of over-centralization in matters educational; a strong belief in home rule in education; a firm faith in liberty—liberty of conscience, freedom of method, room for individuality, development, and self-government. If this is the British educational gospel, it is one worth preaching. During the last half-century a large number of secondary schools for girls have sprung up in England. It is interesting to note that on the whole they have been true to English traditions. Our girls' High Schools are not mere copies of the boys' Grammar Schools; there is differentiation among them, and considerable individuality. Women secondary teachers, considering their disadvantages, have taken their full share in developing education in England.

That educational progress, which has been so marked in England, has also been taking place in other civilized countries; but in the higher education of girls and women England at the present moment probably stands first. Our progress in this department has been exceptionally rapid, and is probably due largely to the unusual wisdom of the pioneers of the movement. Time has already robbed us of many of that little band of earnest men and women who initiated the movement in England; but some are, fortunately, still with us. When the time comes to write a history of English education in the nineteenth century, it will be a very bright page that will record the first steps taken in obtaining a higher education for girls and women. Our pioneers toiled unceasingly; they did more, they



waited patiently till times were ripe. They aroused no unnecessary friction ; slowly and surely they won a victory, with results so great that we can at present only dimly guess at them. Now that a younger generation of women are coming to the front to face the new problems of the day, it is exceedingly appropriate that we should look back to those early days. In this book some insight is given us into these first stages of progress, which must have an intense interest for those who are at present beginning to reap the harvest which that pioneer band sowed in great faith and in much anxiety.

There are probably at least four classes of persons who will find an interest in this book :—

(1) British teachers of all kinds, who will be enabled by its means to get a fair survey of the education of the British Isles. That such information is necessary can be doubted by no one who takes the trouble to find out how far the ordinary teacher realizes the differences existing between the various systems of education in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

(2) Our fellow-teachers in other parts of the British Empire. It is a great loss to the Empire, politically and educationally, that its teachers know so little of the state of education in the different countries which make up that Empire. An Englishwoman has now made it easy for our fellow-teachers to understand a good deal about the present state of Secondary Education for girls in the home country. It is much to be desired that Colonial teachers would issue companion volumes, giving us information about Colonial education. Blue Books are not generally considered to be very

interesting by the average teacher ; but the facts to be found in them, enlivened and made graphic by personal experience, are often of the very greatest interest.

(3) Foreigners who desire to understand the present state of English education.

(4) And finally, all those interested in educational progress—parents, teachers, politicians, and social reformers.

Behind us lie the gallant efforts of our pioneer women ; around us, the surging chaos of to-day's problems ; before us, difficulties many and great. It is of the utmost importance at the present moment for us to clearly realize that the future is largely in our hands ; and, in order to build for that future a satisfactory structure, we must know the present, and understand something of the past. Miss Bremner's survey has come at a most opportune moment, and is likely to stimulate considerably the ever-growing interest in education, which is one of the most marked features of our time:

E. P. HUGHES.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS little book is a rather late outcome of the International Congress of Education held at Chicago in 1893. Some of our American sisters (the National Council of Women, U.S.A.) conceived the brilliant idea of publishing a whole set of reports dealing with the education of girls and women in all civilized countries. Lady Henry Somerset and Miss Frances Willard, whose interest in what affects the well-being of their sex is well known, asked me to undertake education in Great Britain; and it is to this circumstance that this book owes its existence. I sought diligently for such a book as this, failed to find it, was assured by the publishers whom I consulted that such books do not pay, and are therefore not written, and finally sat down to the lengthy undertaking of collecting the facts myself. When it was finished, the American sisters had no funds wherewith to publish it. I sought the advice of Miss E. P. Hughes, of Cambridge, and of an English publisher, rewrote my work since it was now for the English market and required enlargement. I mention these circumstances because they have laid me under heavy obligations to the many persons who have supplied me with information. I had to appeal to them twice for facts, figures, dates.

In especial I have to thank for their ready help and courtesy, officials of the Education Department, of the

Science and Art Department, and Charity Commission ; the heads of colleges, schools, boards, and institutions named in this book, who almost all helped me in every possible way ; especially Mr. G. W. Alexander, Clerk to the School Board for Glasgow, and Miss Jane Galloway, of Queen Margaret College, Glasgow, who have furnished the Second Part, dealing with Scottish education ; Miss Hughes for the Preface and much excellent advice. My helpers are of course in no way responsible for my opinions, inferences, and deductions.

Unfortunately we have been unable to obtain an account of education in Ireland on the same conditions as the Scottish section is supplied : mere devotion to education. If another edition of this book were called for, the omission might be rectified.

It is too much to expect that a book of this kind should be free of error. I shall esteem it a favour if all errors are pointed out to me by readers, so that I may be able to correct them, if the opportunity present itself.

During my visits to colleges and schools I was over and over again struck by the isolation in which women teachers work. Many able and accomplished women know little of the world of education outside the corner of the vineyard which engrosses their attention. Should this book help to bridge that isolation, I shall be well satisfied.

C. S. BREMNER.

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