

Editor's Note

THE International Congress of Women of 1899 has come and gone. What was the good of it? What has it left behind?

The seven volumes of its Transactions must furnish the answer to these questions, and we have every confidence that this answer will be deemed satisfactory by those who have a right conception of the object of the Congress.

Some have found reason for reproach in the fact that the Congress did not pronounce judgment or offer definite opinions on all the vexed questions affecting women, and women's work and position, in the world to-day. To pronounce judgment, offer opinions, and solve problems formed no part of its scheme. Its object was more easily compassed; it consisted simply in bringing together persons of experience (men as well as women, be it remembered) from all parts of the world, who could provide us with facts regarding the position, work, and opportunities of women at the end of the nineteenth century, and who could trace for us the history of various phases of woman's progress in various lands, and show us the trend and character of the movement, and the signs of its development in each individual country.

This collection of facts we now present to all interested in woman's mission and work in the world, in the hope that it may help to form right judgment and wise action.

The Editor must appeal for indulgence from both

EDITOR'S NOTE

contributors and readers for many shortcomings, but more especially because imperative considerations of time and space and money have prevented many valuable papers from being given in full. The sacrifice thus forced on us is deeply to be deplored, but it was inevitable. It has been minimised as far as possible by the aid and advice of experienced literary friends, to whom the grateful thanks of the Editor and of the International Council of Women are hereby tendered for their valuable assistance in the work of editing as a whole. In a special degree this acknowledgment is made to Mr and Mrs Arthur Scaife.

Even more important, however, than the papers read at the Congress are the personal relationships then formed between workers hitherto unknown to one another, and belonging to different lands and races, but who henceforth will possess a new sense of stimulating sympathy and of mutual support in their united efforts for the common weal.

May these volumes, therefore, not only prove a valuable little library of reference, but may they revive and strengthen the world over the inspiring memories of July 1899.

ISHBEL ABERDEEN,
Retiring President.

Haddo House, Aberdeen.
December 1899.

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VOL. II.

(a)

WOMEN IN EDUCATION

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF WOMEN OF 1899

EDITED BY
THE COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN
President

VOL. II.

(a*)



WOMEN IN EDUCATION

BEING THE

TRANSACTIONS OF THE

EDUCATIONAL SECTION

OF

The International Congress of Women

LONDON, JULY 1899



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY MISS C. L. MAYNARD

Convener of the Educational Committee



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION by Miss MAYNARD	i
THE CHILD: LIFE AND TRAINING.	
REMARKS by COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN	1
(A) Psychology of Childhood.	
<i>Papers:</i> Professor EARL BARNES (<i>United States</i>)	2
" Miss MARGARET MACMILLAN (<i>Great Britain</i>)	4
<i>Discussion:</i> Miss M. Reid ; Miss Wood ; Mme. Kauffman	6-7
(B) Parental Responsibility.	
<i>Paper:</i> Mrs HART DAVIS (<i>Great Britain</i>)	7
<i>Discussion:</i> Mrs Franklin (<i>Great Britain</i>); Mrs C. P. Stetson (<i>United States</i>)	10-12
(C) Education as a Preparation for Life.	
<i>Paper:</i> Mrs MARIA PURDY PECK (<i>United States</i>)	13
<i>Discussion:</i> Miss Youngman (<i>Great Britain</i>)	17
(D) Connection between Home and School Life.	
<i>Paper:</i> Mrs H. A. BOOMER (<i>Canada</i>)	19
<i>Discussion:</i> The Hon. and Rev. Canon Lyttelton, M.A.	22
(E) The Kindergarten.	
ADDRESS by Miss FRANCES GRAY	25
<i>Papers:</i> Mme. DU PORTUGALL (<i>Italy</i>)	26
" Miss ELINOR A. WELLDON (<i>Great Britain</i>)	29
" Mme. MICHAELIS (<i>Great Britain</i>)	31
" Mrs WALTER WARD (<i>née</i> EMILY LORD) (<i>Great Britain</i>)	33

	PAGE
(F) Teaching of Mentally and Physically Defective Children.	
<i>Papers</i> : Mrs BURGWIN (<i>Great Britain</i>)	35
" The Hon. MAUDE STANLEY	35
" Dr FRANCIS WARNER, M.D., F.R.C.P. (<i>Great Britain</i>)	35
<i>Discussion</i> : Mrs A. C. Wilson; Fräulein Agnes Burchardt	38-39

SCHOOL.

(A) Primary Education.

<i>Address</i> by Miss FLORA STEVENSON	40
<i>Paper</i> : Mrs STANTON BLATCH (<i>United States</i>)	40
<i>Discussion</i> : Mrs Annie Jeuneess Millar (<i>United States</i>); Mrs E. M. Field (<i>Great Britain</i>); Miss Anne M. Hamilton (<i>Sweden</i>); Miss Fanny Calder; Mr Alfred Percival Gray, M.A.; Mrs Jane Hutton; Mrs John Hoodless (<i>Canada</i>); Mrs Brydges Adams; Mme. Odde Deflou (<i>France</i>); Doctor Maria Montessori (<i>Italy</i>); Mrs Maitland	45-52

(B) Secondary Education.

<i>Address</i> by Mrs WOODHOUSE	53
<i>Papers</i> : Fräulein D. VON DÜMMING (<i>Germany</i>)	55
" Miss DOBOTHEA BEALE (<i>Great Britain</i>)	58
<i>Discussion</i> : Mrs Bryant (<i>Great Britain</i>)	64
<i>Papers</i> : Dr MARY MILLS PATRICK (<i>Turkey</i>)	65
" Dr ENGEL IGNACE (<i>Hungary</i>)	67
" Miss GREY (<i>St Albans</i>)	67
" Miss ALICE RAVEN HILL	67
" Mrs NEILSON (<i>Norway</i>)	67
" Mrs HUMPHREY OWEN	67

UNIVERSITIES.

(A) In Europe and America.

<i>Papers</i> : Dr KARTER SCHIRMACHE, Dr Jur. (<i>Germany</i>)	68
" Fröken LYDIA WAHLESTROM, Ph.D. (<i>Sweden</i>)	72
" Mlle. ZÉNÉIDE IVANOFF (<i>Russia</i>)	74
" Fru DAGMAR HJOET, B.A. (<i>Denmark</i>)	76
<i>Discussion</i> : Miss A. S. Lovetus (<i>Kensington</i>); Fräulein Agnes Burohardt (<i>Germany</i>)	78

(B) In Great Britain and her Colonies.

<i>Papers</i> : Miss LOUISA INNES LUMSDEN (<i>Scotland</i>)	78
" Mrs CARRIE M. DERICK (<i>Canada</i>)	81
<i>Discussion</i> : Miss Annie Rogers (<i>Oxford</i>); Miss Martin, B.A. (<i>South Africa</i>); Mrs Ashley Carus-Wilson; Miss Davies	85-89

MODERN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENTS.

	PAGE
(A) In the United States.	
(B) In Germany.	
(C) In Great Britain and Ireland.	
(D) In India and the Colonies.	
(E) In China and Japan.	
<i>Papers</i> : Mrs FELIX ADLER (<i>United States</i>)	90
" Miss SADIE AMERICAN (<i>United States</i>)	92
" Dr CECIL REDDIE, B.Sc., Ph.D. (<i>Great Britain</i>)	96
" Mr J. H. BADLEY (<i>Great Britain</i>)	100
<i>Discussion</i> : Mrs Walter Ward (<i>Great Britain</i>)	107-108

TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

<i>Address</i> by Miss F. L. CALDER	109
<i>Papers</i> : Frau HEDWIG HEYL (<i>Germany</i>)	110
" Mrs MARY E. PLAYNE (<i>Great Britain</i>)	113
" Frau MARIANNE HAINISCH (<i>Austria</i>)	116
" Mlle. DU CAJU (<i>Belgium</i>)	122
" Mrs HOODLESS (<i>Canada</i>)	127
" Fru HIRTA-RETAIUS (<i>Sweden</i>)	129
<i>Discussion</i> : Miss Hadland; Mrs Field; Mrs Humphrey Owen; Mrs Alexander Ross; Miss Digbie; Miss A. Brown	137-138

WOMEN AS EDUCATORS.

<i>Address</i> by Miss MAITLAND	139
(A) Registration and Status of Teachers.	
<i>Paper</i> : Mr FRANCIS STORR, M.A. (<i>Great Britain</i>)	140
<i>Discussion</i> : Mrs Bryant; Mr Sadler; Fräulein Burchardt	146-147
(B) University Degrees and their Influence on Professional Life.	
<i>Papers</i> : Professor Doctor PAULINE SCHIFF (<i>Italy</i>)	147
" Miss CHARLOTTE ROSS (<i>Canada</i>)	148
" Professor PATRICK GEDDES, F.R.S.E. (<i>Great Britain</i>)	152
<i>Discussion</i> : Miss Jane Faulton; Miss Mary Q. Brown; Mrs Bryant	155

CO-EDUCATION.

(A) In Schools.	
<i>Papers</i> : Mme. PIKETYNSKA (<i>Switzerland</i>)	156
" Fru RAGNA NIELSEN (<i>Norway</i>)	158
" Frau J. PALMGREN (<i>Sweden</i>)	160
<i>Discussion</i> : Mrs Ralph	161-165

(B) In Universities.

<i>Papers:</i> Mrs DAGMAR HJORT (<i>Denmark</i>)	1
Dean LOUISE BROWNELL (<i>United States</i>)	1
<i>Discussion:</i> Miss Mabel Hawtrey; Mrs Sheldon Amos; Miss Howell; Miss Georgina Robertson; Miss Lumsden; Miss C. I. Rice; Miss Ida Harper (<i>Washington</i>); Miss Maynard; Mrs Nielsen; Mr Charles G. D. Roberts (<i>Canada</i>); Mr Badley	169-1

TRAINING OF TEACHERS.

ADDRESS by Miss ALICE WOODS	1
---------------------------------------	---

(A) For General Teaching.

<i>Paper:</i> Miss A. J. COOPER (<i>Great Britain</i>)	1
<i>Discussion:</i> Miss E. P. Hughes	1
<i>Paper:</i> Mlle. CARTER (<i>Belgium</i>)	1
<i>Discussion:</i> Miss Flora Stevenson (<i>Edinburgh</i>); Miss Meyer; Miss Annie Campbell (<i>Boston</i>); Mrs Bridge Adams; Miss Agnes Wård; Miss Kinne	184-1

(B) For Special Subjects.

<i>Papers:</i> Mme. MARION (<i>France</i>)	1
„ Mme. BERGMAN-ÖSTERBERG (<i>Sweden</i>)	1
„ Miss ELLA PTCROFT (<i>Great Britain</i>)	1
„ Mrs SPENCE WEISS (<i>Great Britain</i>)	1

EXAMINATIONS AND EXAMINATION SYSTEMS.

ADDRESS by Miss H. M. JONES	1
<i>Papers:</i> Mr MICHAEL E. SADLER (<i>Great Britain</i>)	1
„ Miss MARGARET E. ROBERTSON (<i>Great Britain</i>)	1
<i>Discussion:</i> Miss Lacey	203-4

WOMEN IN EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

A CONFERENCE on education held fifty years ago would have been a very different matter from what it is to-day. The foreign delegates, especially the Germans and Swiss, might have brought our insular darkness some enlightenment, but among ourselves there would scarcely have been enough matter to fill out the discussion of a single day. A point might have been raised as to whether modern languages were better learned first by ear or from a book, and a good debate might have been maintained as to whether the memory was the main faculty to which to appeal, or whether a child should be continually urged to seek for the reason of things presented, and thus practically learn nothing but what reaches it through the understanding.

But many changes have taken place since those days, and experience has not been wasted on us. We now see more and more clearly that education is not a matter of paper and ink and the printed page, but is the taking up of the whole child, body and mind, just as it stands there, and endeavouring so to train the faculties of each as to help them to do the very best along the varied journey of life that lies before them. The natural development has to be aided, and the bypaths of mistake, right and left, to be avoided, and as during the first years of life they follow whither we lead, our task is full of hope. Yet it is necessary to make sure that the baser nature does not interfere with the higher and turn it aside.

A little book on education opens with an amusing illustration,

to the effect that a verb of teaching is followed by two accusatives, e.g., *I teach John Latin*. *John* and *Latin*, that is, the mind of the ordinary child and the new subject that is to be introduced into that mind. Of the Latin there has doubtless been sufficient knowledge, but John has been to his instructors an almost unknown territory, and was never studied as a whole. He was immature, and not very interesting. Now, the main attention rightly falls on John, and a week's conference is all too short in which to discuss him and his possibilities. Gifts of ability and of character, and a heart to love and a will to act, that may do good to thousands, all lie folded up under that blunt exterior, as surely as the strong leaves and white flowers of the horse chestnut lie packed together, scentless and colourless and almost formless, in the brown buds of the spring. We must have a care to all these possibilities, and memory and understanding occupy after all but a part of life; the energies and emotions must each have their share; perseverance and accuracy, taste, enthusiasm and judgment must all be appealed to, and the eye learn something of the canons of beauty, and the hand be brought into obedience to the eye.

In *The Psychology of Childhood*, John, even in his earliest and crudest forms, became, in skilful hands, a subject of unparalleled interest. The Kindergarten came next with its great stress on practical and concrete knowledge, showing a strong reaction against beginning instruction with "foundational truths." It is now the blossoms of the tree of knowledge that are plucked off for the children, instead of endeavouring to force the roots into their unwilling hands; for the roots are often very late products of thought, general statements which have been carefully formed from a multiplicity of details. As to our primary schools, it was rather bewildering to be told by a member of the London School Board that the education given in them was "as bad as bad could be." After all the attention given since 1870, this was a blow, but other speakers cheered us again as to the results, even while admitting that there was in our system much room for improvement. One exceedingly good paper on secondary schools brought forward the point whether lessons of moral worth are not sometimes missed which were well taught in the old-fashioned days. In a thoroughly good modern school the burden of the work is taken off the pupil and put on to the teacher. Lessons are short, bright and well varied; and the mind and energy of the teacher are kept at full stretch, the eye of the pupil is constantly appealed to, and the interest is

never allowed to flag. The old system was dull and faulty enough, but it brought out dogged perseverance and fidelity. On the third day very interesting papers about the girl of eighteen were read by Germans, Swedes, Danes, Americans and others, India, Canada and our other colonies contributing; Great Britain was represented by a paper admirable for its lucidity, read by one of the first three students at Girton College.

Technical Education and the Registration of Teachers brought much material for thought. On the fourth day when the vexed subject of Co-Education was discussed, the ordinary listener was left under the impression that all human ills would be mitigated, and some swept off the face of the earth, if only Eton and Harrow were thrown open to girls as well as to boys. The speakers, moreover, were nearly all actual experts, the opening paper by a delegate from Switzerland being one it is difficult to praise too highly. The speaker went to the foundation of the matter, showing how the ideal human being is not distinctively either man or woman, and that it is the part they have in *common* that is the noblest, and is the one to be strengthened; where the difference of sex is emphasised, there is always loss. The experiments in co-education in England are few and timid compared to those abroad, and we listened with deep interest to the scale and thoroughness of such work in other countries. All agreed that children under twelve, perhaps under fourteen, are with benefit educated together, as not a shadow of distinction either mentally or physically need be made between them, and a large number were in favour of co-education on a different footing at the Universities, but the conflict was at its height round the five growing years from thirteen to eighteen. The argument that, boys and girls being set together in families, it was wiser not to interfere with the order of nature, but to educate them together from the cradle to maturity, was well pressed home; but the fact of the instinctive reserves felt during the growing ages toward all but their immediate family, coupled on the part of the boy with a certain amount of contempt for the affairs of the girl, was not touched on, whereas it might with equal justice be taken as an argument for their separation.

The subjects of the training of teachers and the benefits and difficulties of examinations proved a good field for debate. The papers were excellent.

Seeing how rapidly the most important subjects had to be flitted over, the suggestion of the extent and riches of this territory must have come forcibly home to every mind, but surely

at last we may believe that we are on the right track. It is character and not attainment that is the pre-eminently important thing, and all the wondrous array of tools we have at command is but means to the one great end of forming it. The *Latin* is at last discovered to be entirely subservient to *John*, and is merely a good athletic ground for developing his mental muscles and establishing the keenness and correctness of his taste. Character of the right sort, strong to bear a great strain, yet fine and soft in texture for the complex work of life, is a thing of slow growth, and the result of a whole range of lofty influences, religious, moral, literary and social. Nothing in the world costs so much to make, and nothing is so beautiful when made. It is worth all our efforts. If we can implant principles that prevent hasty and superficial judgment, that take beauty out of petty and enervating pleasures, that induce simplicity and nobleness of taste, that give some true estimate of the worthy and the worthless objects of pursuit, that turn the mind from the effect to the cause, from the surface to the centre, from the transitory to the permanent, we have done a great deal, and if we can hold up fidelity as beautiful, humanity as a thing to be loved, and integrity as the very law of life, a brighter day may yet lie before the human race.

O. L. MAYNARD,
Convener of the Educational Committee
(Mistress of Westfield College).

INDEX.

- ABBOTSHOLME type of School referred to by Mr Cecil Reddie (G.B.), 96.
- Aberdeen, Countess of, in the Chair, First Session, Section—The Child: Life and Training, opening remarks, 1.
- University, lectureships in Education at, 179.
- Aberystwith College, in relation to women, 79.
- Abiturium examinations, Germany (*see* Donning, Fr. D. von), 70.
- Adams, Mrs Bridges (G.B.), (M.L.S.B.), on Class Distinctions in Elementary Teaching, 184.
- on the commercial character of present English primary education, 49.
- Adler, Miss Hanna, M.A. (Denmark), success of, in co-education, 167.
- Mrs Felix (U.S.), The Working Man's School, New York City, 90.
- Advisory body, or Committee on Education, desirability of, for England, Mrs Bryant (G.B.), on, 65.
- in Norway, Fru Nielsen (Norway), on, 67.
- Agricultural Education in rural districts, Italy, 51.
- Amadori, Rosy, Italy, 148.
- American, Miss Sadie (U.S.), reading paper by Mrs Felix Adler (U.S.), on the Working Man's School, New York City, 90.
- Vacation Schools (in the United States), 92.
- Amos, Mrs Sheldon (G.B.), on the theoretical character of objections to co-education, 171.
- Anderson, Mrs Garrett- (G.B.), pioneer student of medicine in Paris, 68.
- Apprenticeship in Belgium, 125.
- Arbet-stugor in Sweden, described by their founder, *see* Retzius, Fru Hierts.
- Athletics in Colleges, 14.
- Augusta, Empress of Germany, Household Commission instigated by, 111.
- Australia, School System Syllabus of, 118-21.
- Austria, Technical Education in, Frau Marianne Hainisch (Austria), 116.
- University Education for Women in, Fr. Levetus (Austria), on, 78.
- BACELLI, Minister, Italy, Agricultural education established by, 51.
- Badley, Mr J. H. (G.B.), Bedales School (England), A Modern Educational Experiment, 100.
- on the pause in co-education and its effects, 172.
- Bangor College, Wales, in relation to women, 79.
- Barnard College, United States, in relation to Harvard and Columbia Universities, 168.
- Barnes, Prof. Earl, (U.S.), The Psychology of Childhood, 2.

- Beale, Miss Dorothea (Principal of the Cheltenham Ladies' College, G.B.), State Organisation of Secondary Education, 68.
- Bedales School (England), A Modern Educational Experiment, Mr J. H. Badley (G.B.), 100.
- Bedford College, London, Training department, 181.
- Belgium, Professional Education for Women in, Mlle. Du Caju (Belgium), 122.
- Training of Teachers in, Nellie Carter (Belgium), 180.
- Bell, Dr, founder of the Professorships of Education at Edinburgh and St Andrews, 179.
- and Lancaster, introducers of the Monitorial System in Schools, 175.
- Benari, Alafida, Italy, pioneer of improvement for women in Italy, 148.
- Berlin Lodge, Housekeeping and cooking school, Germany, 111.
- Bezdongeff, Prof. (Russia), Lectures for women founded by, at St Petersburg, 75.
- Bischoffsheim professional school for girls, Brussels, 124.
- Blatch, Mrs Stanton (U.S.), Manual Training in Primary Schools, 40.
- Boomer, Mrs H. A., President of the London (Ontario) Local Council of Women, Canada, The Connection between Home and School Life, 19.
- Breymenn, Frau Henriette Schröder, great-niece of Fröbel, 26.
- British and Foreign School Society, work of, 178.
- Brown, Miss A. (G.B.), on the need of better organisation for training technical teachers, 138.
- Miss Mary Q. (U.S.), on education among negro women in the United States, 155.
- Brownell, Dean Louise (U.S.), Co-education in Universities in the United States, 167.
- Bryant, Mrs (G.B.), explanatory remarks on the Position of Women Teachers and the cost of girls' education, 155.
- on the Status of Women Teachers and their pay, 146.
- on the threefold character of the education given in Great Britain, and on its organisation, 64.
- Burchard, Frä. (Germany), on equality of public education for both sexes in Italy, 78.
- on Kindergarten training for every woman, 39.
- on the Status of Teachers, 147.
- Burgwin, Mrs (G.B.), Teaching of Mentally and Physically Defective Children under the London School Board, 85.
- CAJU, Mlle. Du (Belgium), L'Enseignement Professionnel Féminin en Belgique, 122.
- Calder, Miss F. L. (G.B.), in the Chair, Technical Education Section, opening remarks, 109.
- on Training Schools in Cookery, England, 48.
- organiser of Domestic school classes in elementary Schools, England, 113.
- Cambridge Training College, foundation and work of, 180.
- training for teachers' scheme, 177.
- University (England), in relation to women, 86.
- Campbell, Miss Annie (U.S.), on journalism as training for teaching, 184.
- Canada, excellence of School system in, Mrs Hoodless (Canada), 49.
- Technical Education in, Mrs Hoodless (Canada), 127.
- University Degrees in, Women as Educators, Miss Charlotte Ross (Canada), 148.
- Universities of, in their relation to Women, Miss Carrie M. Derick (Canada), 81.

- Cape Colony, The Colleges of, in relation to Women's education, Miss Martin, B.A. (South Africa), 57.
- Cardiff College, Wales, in relation to Women students, 78.
- Carter, Nelise (Belgium), Training of Teachers (in Belgium), 150.
- Carus Wilson, Mrs Ashley, *see* Wilson, Mrs Ashley Carus.
- Cassel, Germany, Housekeeping School at, 111.
- Character-building by means of Kindergarten training, *see* Ward, Mrs Walter.
- effect of Education on (a call for patience), Mrs Walter Ward (G.B.), *on*, 107.
- Possible Effect on, of Modern Education Systems, Miss Youngman (G.B.), *on*, 17.
- Chaovin, Mlle. T. D. *de* on Droit France, would-be barrister, 69.
- Chicago University (U.S.), in relation to women, 163.
- Child, The : Life and Training Section, First Section, Countess of Aberdeen in the Chair, opening remarks, 1.
- — — — — Second Section, Miss Frances Gray in the Chair, opening remarks, 25.
- Childhood, The Psychology of, Prof. Earl Barnes (U.S.), 2.
- Child Life, The Psychology of, Miss Margaret Macmillan (G.B.), 4.
- — — — — and Training, on the Kindergarten System, Elmor A. Weidon (G.B.), 29.
- Child-Stair Society, in the United States and in England, 2, 34, 63.
- Children, Mental and Physically Defective, Teaching of, Mrs Burgwin (G.B.), 33.
- — — — — Hon. Maude Stanley (G.B.), *on*, 2.
- — — — — Dr Francis Warner (G.B.), *on*, 2.
- Clark University (U.S.), the President of and his work, 63.
- Clarke, Dr (U.S.), views as to co-education combated, 160.
- Class Distinctions in Elementary Teaching, Mrs Bridges Adams (G.B.), *on*, 154.
- Claudia, Baroness Nicotera, Italy, pioneer in legal and social improvement for women in that country, 143.
- Codrington College, Wargrave-on-Thames, Co-education at, Mrs Ralph (G.B.), *on*, 161.
- Co-Education Section, Miss Maynard (G.B.), in the Chair, opening remarks, 154.
- at Codrington College, Wargrave-on-Thames, Mrs Ralph (G.B.), *on*, 161.
- in Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, 52, 172.
- Frobel's reason for, 34.
- limitations for, Mr C. Reddie (G.B.), 95.
- possible ill-effects on girls, Miss Mabel Hartrey (G.B.), *on*, 169.
- in Schools, Mme. Piccrynska (Switzerland), 154.
- — — — — in Denmark, Discussion on, Fru Dagmar Hjort (Denmark), 163.
- — — — — (Norway), Fru Rarna Nielsen (Norway), 153.
- — — — — (Sweden), Fru J. Palmgren (Sweden), 160.
- — — — — Scotland, defended by Miss Georgina Robertson, 171.
- Theoretical character of objections made thereto, Mrs Sheldon Amos (G.B.), *on*, 171.
- Thoroughness in, Miss C. I. Rice, *on*, 171.
- in Universities in the United States, Dean Louise Brownell (U.S.), 167.
- College of Preceptors, London, work of, 174.

- Columbia University (U.S.), in relation to women, 168.
 Connection between Home and School Life, Mrs H. A. Boomer (Canada), 19.
 Conradi, Mme., pioneer of University Education for Women in Russia, 74.
 Cook Kurth Housekeeping School, Germany, 111.
 Cookery training Schools in Great Britain, Miss Fanny Calder (G.B.), on, 48.
 Cooper, Miss A. J. (G.B.), The Training of Teachers (G.B.), 174.
 Co-operation of Parents with Teachers, *see* Connection between Home Life and School Life.
 ———— Mrs Franklin (G.B.), on, 10.
 ———— Hon. and Rev. Canon Lyttelton (G.B.), on, 22.
 Copenhagen, women students' Clubs at, 77.
 Cornell University (U.S.), co-education in, 168.
 ———— in relation to women, 79.
 County Councils and Domestic Educational Training, 113.
- DALHOUSIE University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, co-education in, 82, 172.
 Dar ul-Moulimat, normal school for Mohammedan girls, Constantinople, 66.
 Daughters' Education, Mrs Ashley Carus Wilson (G.B.), on, 38.
 Davies, Miss Emily (G.B.), in the Chair, Universities Section, 68, concluding remarks on University Extension work, 89.
 Deflou, Mme. Oddo (France), on Primary Education in France, 50.
 Defective Children, Teaching of, *see* Teaching.
 Degrees open to Women, French Universities, 69.
 ———— Canada, 148.
- Denmark, Co-Education in Schools in, Discussion on, Fru Dagmar Hjort (Denmark), 165.
 ———— (University) Education of Women in, Fru Dagmar Hjort (Denmark), 76.
 Derick, Miss Carrie (Canada), Universities in their relation to Women, 81.
 Diocesan College, Vandeboesch, Cape Colony, in relation to Women, 88.
 Digbie, Miss, on ignorance as a cause of domestic discomfort among the poor, 138.
 Discussion on Co-Education in Schools in Denmark, Fru Dagmar Hjort (Denmark), 165.
 D'Ivanoff, *see* Ivanoff, d'.
- Domestic Economy, Training of Teachers in (G.B.), Miss Ella Pycroft (G.B.), 191.
 ———— Ignorance and its results among the poorer classes, Miss Digbie on, 138.
 ———— Science, Present Position of Technical Education in, Mrs Mary E. Playne (G.B.), 113.
 ———— Training of Teachers (in the United States), Miss Kinne (U.S.), on, 187.
 ———— Service, a desirable subject in Elementary School, Mrs Alex. Ross (G.B.), 137.
 ———— not the object of Technical instruction in Elementary Schools, Mrs Humphrey Owen (G.B.), on, 137.
 ———— training for Canadian boys, desirability of, Mrs Hoodless (Canada), 49.
 ———— in Germany, *see* Technical Education.
- Donning, Frä. D. von, (Germany), President Frauenbildung Frauen Studium, Wiesbaden, Secondary Education for Girls (Germany), 55.
 Dublin University, examinations of in education, 179

- GAMES (for Girls), The General Effect of, Mrs Spence Weiss (G.B.), 194.
 — overdoing of, for girls, 189.
 — teacher of for girls needed, 49.
- Garrett-Anderson, Mrs, *see* Anderson, Mrs Garrett.
- Geddes, Prof. Patrick, F.R.S.E., (G.B.), University Degrees and the Place of Women in Universities, 152.
- General Effect, The, of Games (on Girls), Mrs Spence Weiss (G.B.), 194.
- German Society for the Nursing of the Poor, *see* Frauenbildung.
- Germany, Secondary Education for Girls in, Frä. D. von Donning (Germany), 55.
 — Technical Education in, Frau Hedwig Heyl (Germany), 110.
 — Women's (University) Education in and in France, Dr Kaethe Schirmacher, D.Ph., (Germany), 68.
- Girls' Education, future cost of, Mrs Bryant (G.B.), on, 155.
 — Public Day School Company, work of, 176.
 — School Committee, Swedish Government, views of on Co-education after childhood, 164.
- Glasgow County Council in relation to Technical Education in Domestic Science, 114.
 — lectureships in education at, 179.
- Gothenburg University, Sweden, 72.
- Gray, Miss Frances (G.B.), in the Chair, Second Session Section—The Child : Life and Training, opening remarks, 25.
 — Mr Alfred Percival, M.A., H.M. Inspector of Schools for Southwark (G.B.), on Physical Education under the London School Board, 49.
- Great Britain, Examinations and Examination Methods in, 198, 205.
 — Modern Educational Experiment in, Bedales School, Mr J. H. Badley (G.B.), 100.
 — Codigmore College, Mrs Ralph (G.B.), 165.
 — Physical Training as a Profession in, Mme. Bergman Österberg, (Sweden), 188.
 — Training of Teachers, Miss A. J. Cooper (G.B.), 174.
 — in Domestic Economy, Miss Ella Pycroft (G.B.), 191.
 — Universities in, and Women Students at, Miss Annie Rogers (G.B.), on, 85.
 — and Ireland, Universities in (in relation to Women), Louisa Innes Lumsden (G.B.), 78.
- Grey, Miss (G.B.), on handicraft training in secondary education, 67.
- Gyllenband, Baroness Uxkull-, (Germany), educational work of, 57.
- HADLAND, Miss (G.B.), on certification of Matrons for Poor Law Employment, 137.
- Hainisch, Frau. Marianne (Austria), Technical Education (in Austria), 116.
- Hall, G. Stanley, pioneer in Child Study, America, 2, 3.
- Hamilton, Fröken Anne M. (Sweden), on Miss Lundin's mode of teaching sloyd, 47.
- Handicraft teaching, desirability of, in Secondary Education, Miss Grey (G.B.), on, 67.
- Harper, Miss Ida (U.S.), on Miss Hawtrey's remarks (*q.v.*), and on Co-education, 172.
- Harvard College (U.S.), early high school education of its Honour men, 13.
 — in relation to Women, 168.
- Hawtrey, Miss Mabel (G.B.), on possible ill-effects of co-education on girls, 169.

- Herbert, Auberon (G.B.), protest against examinations, *cited*, 197.
- Heyl, Frau Hedwig (Germany), Cooking and Housekeeping schools started by, in Germany, 111, 112.
- Technical Education (in Germany), 110.
- Higher Education of Women in Russia, H. E. Zénéide Ivanoff (Russia), 74.
- Hjort, Fru Dagmar, B.A. (Denmark), Discussion on Co-education in Schools (Denmark), 165.
- Education in Denmark (University) for Women, 76.
- Home and Colonial Society's Training College, work of, 176.
- Home Life and School Life, Connection between, Mrs H. A. Boomer (Canada), 19.
- Hoodless, Mrs John (Canada), on Education in the United States and in Canada, and on teaching boys domestic matters, 49.
- Technical Education in Canada, 127.
- Housekeeping Schools in Belgium, 126.
- in Germany, *see* Heyl.
- Howell, Miss, on the Barrack and Convent character of separate Colleges for Women and Men, 171.
- Hude, Miss Anna, D.Ph. (Denmark), 77.
- Hughes, Miss E. B. (G.B.), in the Chair, Modern Educational Experiments Section, 90.
- on the Training of Pupil and other Teachers, a Protest, 180.
- Hungary, Women's Educational opportunities in, Dr Engel Ignacz (Hungary), on, 67.
- Hutton, Miss Jane on order and spiritual qualities inculcated in her Kindergarten, 49.
- IGNACZ, Dr Engel (Hungary), on Educational opportunities for Women in Hungary, 67.
- Increase in youthful offenders, 130.
- Individual Kitchens, *see* Kitchens.
- Individuality in Children, 3.
- Innocence of Children, preservation of, Miss M. Reid, on, 6.
- Introduction, Mrs Maynard, i.
- Ireland, Technical education in, 179.
- Irish Universities in relation to Women, 79.
- Italy, agricultural education in rural districts in communal schools, 51.
- Elementary teachers in Rural Districts, difficulties of, Dr Maria Montessori (Italy), 51.
- Equality of public education for both sexes in, Fr. Burchard (Germany), on, 78.
- Italian Universities, Women Students at, Prof. Dr Pauline Schiff (Italy), 147.
- Ivanoff, H. E. Zénéide d' (Russia) Higher Education of Women in Russia, 74.
- JONES, Miss H. M. (G.B.), in the Chair, Examinations and Examination Systems Section, opening remarks, 197.
- Joseph II., Emperor of Austria, establishes Training Institute for Women teachers, 116.
- Journalism as training for teaching, Miss Annie Campbell (U.S.), on, 184.
- KALLE, Herr Fritz (Germany), 111.
- Kamp, Dr Otto (Germany), *ib.*
- Kettler, Frau, pioneer in the Education of Girls in Germany, 70.

- Kindergarten, Fröbel's, founded on Philosophical Ideas, Mme. du Portugal (Italy), 26.
- The, as a Character Builder, a Retrospect and a Forecast, Mrs Walter Ward (G.B.), 33.
- System, Child Life and Training on the, Miss Elinor A Welldon (G.B.), 29.
- Training for every Woman, Fril. Agnes Burchardt (Germany), on, 39.
- — Spiritual qualities called out by, Miss Jane Hutton, on, 49.
- Kindergartens for the Working Classes, Mme. Michaelis (G.B.), 31.
- Kinne, Miss (U.S.), on the Training of Teachers of Domestic Science in the United States, 184.
- LACER, Miss (G. B.), on examinations and examination systems, 203.
- Ladies' College, Cheltenham, Training Department of, 177.
- Lange, Fril. Hélène (Germany), educational work of, 57, 70.
- Latham, Mr, *cited* on Examinations, 202.
- Laundry Work, badness of, in England, 112.
- Lazzati, Cristina, Italian pioneer of Women's improved legal and social status, 148.
- Leland, Stanford University (U.S.), in relation to Women, 168.
- Levetus, Fril. A. S., (Austria), on University Education for Women in Austria, 78.
- Löfving, Miss, 190.
- London County Council, allocation for Technical Education, 113.
- School Board, effects of its general education on Girls, and on domestic training under, 137.
- — — Physical Education under, Mr Alfred Percival Gray, M.A. (G.B.), on, 49.
- — — Training of defective children under, Mrs Burgwin (G.B.), on, 35.
- London University, examinations of, 178.
- Lord, Emily, *see* Ward, Mrs Walter.
- Lumsden, Miss Louisa Innes (G.B.), Warden University Hall for Women Students, St Andrews University, Scotland, reading paper on Canadian Universities in relation to Women, by Miss Carrie M. Derick (Canada), 81.
- on the position of Women Teachers in Scotch Elementary Schools, 117.
- Universities in Great Britain and Ireland (in relation to Women), 78.
- Lund University, Sweden, women in, 72.
- Lundin, Miss Huelda (Sweden), Sloyd methods employed by, 47.
- Lyons, May (U.S.), 88.
- Lytelton, Hon and Rev. Canon, M.A., (G.B.), on co-operation of parents and teachers, and on teaching Children the great facts of life, 22.
- M'GILL University, Canada, in relation to Women, 82.
- Macmillan, Miss Margaret (G.B.), *The Psychology of Child Life*, 4.
- Madras University, superiority of Christian Students at, its causes, 39.
- Maitland, Miss A. C. (G.B.), in the Chair, Women as Educators Section, opening remarks, 139.
- reading paper on Women as Educators—University Degrees, by Miss Charlotte Ross (Canada), 148.
- Mrs, on Education in the United States, 52.
- Manitoba University, Canada, in relation to Women, 85.

- Manual Training in Primary Schools, Mrs Stanton Blatch (U.S.), 40.
- Marenholz, Baroness von, one of Fröbel's successors, 28.
- Maria Grey Training College, London, 177.
- Theresa, Empress of Austria, founder of Austrian national education, 116.
- Mariani, Emilia, Italy, 148.
- Marion, Mme. (France), Training of Teachers for Special Subjects (in France), 185.
- Martin, Miss, B.A. (South Africa), Colleges of Cape Colony in relation to Women, 87.
- Mary Datchelor School (G.B.), Training College, 177.
- Mason, Mrs Charlotte (G.B.), founder of the Parents' National Educational Union, 10.
- Massoni, Maria, Italian pioneer in improvement of legal and social status of Women, 148.
- Maternal Union, Italy, work of, 52.
- Mathematical Tripos, Cambridge (G.B.), varying standard of, 204.
- Maynard, Miss (G.B.), Introduction, i., in the Chair, Co-Education Section, opening remarks, 156, question as to the status of Women teachers in Denmark, in co-operative education, 172.
- Mentally and Physically Defective Children, Teaching of, Mrs Burgwin (G.B.), 85.
- — — — Hon. Maud Stanley (G.B.), *ib.*
- — — — Dr Francis Warner (G.B.), on, *ib.*
- Metropolitan Asylum Board's School for Afflicted Children, Hon. Maude Stanley (G.B.), on, 35.
- Meyer, Miss (G.B.), on Training Colleges for Pupil Teachers in Edinburgh, 184.
- Mrs Kirstine (Denmark), scientific work of, 77.
- Michaelis, Mme., President of the Fröbel Institute, London (G.B.), Kindergartens for the Working Classes, 31.
- Michigan University (U.S.), in relation to Women, 168.
- Miller, Mrs Annie Jenness (U.S.), on rational Physical Education, 45.
- Modern Educational Experiments Section, Miss E. P. Hughes (G.B.), in the Chair, 90.
- — — Experiment (in England), Bedales School, Mr J. H. Badley, (G.B.), 100.
- — — Experiments in Europe, Mr Cecil Reddie (G.B.), 96.
- Montessori, Dr Maria (Italy), on the difficulties of Elementary Teachers in rural districts in Italy, 51.
- Morgenstern, Frau Lina (Germany), reading paper by Frau Hedwig Heyl on Technical Education (in Germany), 110.
- Mothers, influence of, Mrs A. Carus Wilson (G.B.), on, 39.
- NAAS Sloyd for big boys, 48.
- Napoleon I., *cited* on Education, 39.
- National Society, Great Britain, Educational Work of, 178.
- Union of Training Schools of Domestic Economy in Great Britain, work of, 191.
- Negro Women, education of, in the United States, Miss Mary C. Brown (U.S.), on, 155.
- New Brunswick University, in relation to Women, 82.
- York City, The Working Man's School of, Mrs Felix Adler (U.S.), 90.
- Nielsen, Fru Ragna (Norway), Co-Education in (Norwegian) Schools, 158.

- Nielsen, Fru Ragna (Norway), on Educational opportunities for Women in Norway, and on an Advisory Educational Board, 67.
 — on the Status of Women Teachers in Co-operative Schools in Denmark, 172.
 — Miss, the first Danish Woman Doctor, 77.
- Norway, Co-Education in Schools in, Fru Ragna Nielsen (Norway), 158.
 — views on Co-Education in, 158.
 — Women's Educational opportunities in, Fru Ragna Nielsen (Norway) on, 67.
- OBERLIN College (U.S.), Co-Education in, 168.
- Ontario, Canada, Education in, *see* Ross.
- Organisation of Education in Great Britain, Mrs Bryant (G.B.), on, 64.
- Osius, Dr (Germany), 111.
- Österberg, Mme. Bergmann (Sweden), Physical Training at a Profession for Women, 188.
- Owen, Mrs Humphrey (G.B.), on the proper object of Technical Industrial Education, 137.
 — on Secondary Education in Wales, 67.
- Owen's College, regulations of, regarding Women, 79.
- Oxford Higher Examinations, 176.
 — Training Courses, 178.
 — University (England), in relation to Women 85.
- PALMGREN, Fru J. (Sweden), Co-Education in Schools (in Sweden), 160.
- Parental responsibility in the earliest years of Childhood, Mrs Charlotte Perkins Stetson (U.S.), on, 12.
- Parents' National Educational Union (G.B.), value of, Mrs Franklin (G.B.), on, 10, 11.
- Patrick, Dr Mary Mills (Turkey), Education of Women in Turkey, 65.
- Peck, Mrs Maria Purdy (U.S.), Education as a Preparation for Life, 13.
- Pennsylvania University (U.S.), in relation to Women, 163.
- Pestalozzi, 31, 32.
 — Fröbel House (Berlin), Society for the People's Education, teaching given by, 111.
- Physical Education, rational, Mrs Annie Jenness Miller (U.S.), on, 45.
 — under the London School Board, Mr Alfred Percival Gray, M.A., (G.B.), on, 49.
 — Training of Girls, Miss Alice Ravenhill (G.B.), on, 67.
 — as a Profession (for Women), Mme. Bergmann Österberg (Sweden), 188.
- Pieczynska, Mme. (Switzerland), Co-Education in Schools, 156.
- Place of Women in Universities, University Degrees and, Prof. Patrick Geddes, F.R.S.E. (G.B.), 152.
- Playne, Mrs Mary E. (G.B.), The Present Position of Technical Education in Domestic Science, 113.
- Poor Law Matrons, desirability of training and certificates for, Miss Hadland (G.B.), on, 137.
- Portugall, Mme. Du, (Italy), Fröbel's Kindergarten founded on Philosophical Ideas, 26.
- Posen (Prussia), Domestic Training School at, under Government, 112.
- Possible Effects of the Modern Educational System on Character, Miss Youngman (G.B.), on, 17.

- Powell, Mr Oswald (G.B.), reading Mr J. H. Badley's paper on Bedales School, A Modern Educational Experiment, 100.
- Present Position of Technical Education in Domestic Science, Mrs Mary E. Playne (G.B.), 113.
- Presidents of the United States, early and College education of, 15.
- Primary Education Section, Miss Flora Stevenson (G.B.), in the Chair, opening remarks, 40.
- in England, Commercial Character of, Mrs Bridges Adams, M.L.S.B. (G.B.), on, 49.
- School Manual Training, Mrs Stanton Blatch (U.S.), 40.
- Professional Education for Women in Belgium, Mlle. Du Caju (Belgium), 122.
- Prussia, Position of Women in, in relation to Universities, 71.
- Psychology, The, of Childhood, Prof. Earl Barnes (U.S.), 2.
- Child Life, Miss Margaret Macmillan (G.B.), 4.
- Pupil Teachers, training of, England, Miss E. P. Hughes (G.B.), on, 184.
- Scotland, Miss Meyer (G.B.), on, *ib.*
- Miss Flora Stevenson (G.B.), on, *ib.*
- Putnam, Miss Mary (U.S.), pioneer medical student, Paris, 68.
- Pyrooft, Miss Ella (G.B.), The Training of Teachers in Domestic Economy (G.B.), 191.
- QUEBEC Province, Canada, Universities of, in relation to Women, 82.
- Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, in relation to Women, 84-5.
- Quincey Schools, America, errors in, 41.
- RADOLIFFE College, United States, in relation to Harvard and Columbia, 168.
- Ralph, Mrs (G.B.), on Co-education at Codigmore College, Wargrave-on-Thames, 161.
- Ravenhill, Miss Alice, National Health Society, G.B., on Physical Training of Girls, 67.
- Ravozza, Alessandrina, Italy, 148.
- Reddie, Mr Cecil (G.B.), Modern Educational Experiments in Europe, 96.
- Registration and Status of Teachers, Mr Francis Storr, M.A. (G.B.), 140.
- Reid, Miss M., on preserving innocence in children, 6.
- Religion in relation to Education, Hon. and Rev. Canon Lyttelton (G.B.), on, 24.
- Religious teaching in Schools, non-existent in the United States, 15, 91.
- Retzius, Fru Hierta-, (Sweden), Technical Education (in Sweden), 129.
- Rice, Miss C. L., on Thoroughness in Co-Education, 171.
- Roberts, Mr C. G. D., (Canada), in favour of Co-Education, 172.
- Robertson, Miss Georgina (G.B.), defending Co-Education against the accusation of causing immorality in Scotland, 171.
- Miss Margaret E., (G.B.), Examinations and Examination Systems (in G.B.), 202.
- Rogers, Miss Annie (G.B.), on Universities in Great Britain and Women Students at, 85.
- Ross, Miss Charlotte (Canada), Women as Educators—University Degrees, 148.
- Mrs Alexander (G.B.), on the effects of General Education and description of Domestic Education under the London School Board, 137.
- Royal University of Ireland, in relation to Women, 79.
- Examinations in Education conducted by, 179.
- Victoria College, Canada, built by Lord Strathcona for Women residents, M'Gill University, 83.

- Ruskin, *cited on Examinations*, 199.
- Russia, Higher Education of Women in, H. E. Zénéide Serghievna Ivanoff (Russia), 74.
- SADLER, Mr Michael E. (G.B.), on the Status and Registration of Teachers, 147.
- — — Examinations and Examination Systems, 198.
- St Andrew's University, Scotland, professorship of Education established at, 179.
- — — in relation to Women, 80.
- — — George's Training College, Edinburgh, founded, 179.
- — — Hilda's College, Toronto, Canada, 83-4.
- — — Mark's Training College, Chelsea, England, founded, 175.
- — — Petersburg University, in relation to Women, 75.
- Salomon, Director, Sweden, 48.
- Sanfelice, Countess Luisa, Italian Revolutionary and Educational pioneer, 148.
- Schiff, Prof. Dr Pauline (Italy), Women Students at Italian Universities, 147.
- Schirmache, Dr Kaethe, D.Ph. (Germany), Women's (University) Education in France and Germany, 68.
- Schlossmann, Frä. Paula (Germany), reading paper on Secondary Education for Girls in Germany, by Frä. D. von Donning (Germany), 55.
- Scholarships, objections to, 62.
- School Life, Home Life and, connection between, Mrs H. A. Boomer (Canada), 19.
- School Section, First Session, Miss Flora Stevenson (G.B.), in the Chair opening remarks on Primary Education, 40.
- — — Second Session, Mrs Woodhouse (G.B.), in the Chair, opening remarks, 53.
- — — The Working Man's, New York City, Mrs Felix Adler (U.S.), 90.
- Schools, Co-Education in (*see* Maynard), Mme. Pieczynska (Switzerland), 156.
- — — — — in Denmark, Discussion on, Fru Dagmar Hjort (Denmark), 165.
- — — — — in Norway, Fru Ragna Nielsen (Norway), 158.
- — — — — in Sweden, Fru J. Palmgren (Sweden), 160.
- Schröder, Director, Germany, 111.
- — — Henriette, Germany, 112.
- Scotland, Co-Education in, defended by Miss Georgina Robertson (G.B.) 171.
- — — Position of Women Teachers in, Miss Lumsden (G.B.), on, 171.
- — — Training of Pupil Teachers in, Miss Meyer (G.B.), on, 184.
- — — Miss F. Stevenson (G.B.), on, *ib.*
- — — of Teachers in, 178.
- — — Universities of, in relation to Women, 80, *see* St Andrews, etc.
- Secondary Education Session, Mrs Woodhouse (G.B.), in the Chair, opening remarks, 53.
- — — for Girls in Germany, Frä. D. von Donning (Germany), 55.
- — — Great Britain, organisation of, Mrs Bryant (G.B.), on, 64.
- — — in Wales, Mrs Humphrey Owen (G.B.), on, 67.
- — — Schools, State organisation of, Miss Dorothea Beale (G.B.), 58.
- Self-consciousness, danger of exciting in Children by over-studying them, 3, Miss Wood (G.B.), on, 6.

- Separation of the sexes when adolescent, effects of, Mr J. H. Badley (G.B.), on, 172.
- Seodnik, Tina, Italy, 148.
- Sloyd, Swedish, Miss Lundin's method of teaching, Fröken Anne M. Hamilton (Sweden), on, 47.
- Society for Women, Italy, work of, 51.
- Societies for Child Study, 2, 36, 63.
- Special Subjects, Training of Teachers for (in France), Mme. Marion (France), 185.
- Stanley, Hon. Maude (G.B.), Teaching of Mentally and Physically Defective Children under the Metropolitan Association Board, Great Britain, 35.
- Stasoff, Mile., Pioneer of University Education for Women to Russia, 74.
- State Organisation of Secondary Education, Miss Dorothea Beale (G.B.), 58.
- Status of Teachers in England, Mr Michael Sadler (G.B.), 147.
- — — Registration and, Mr Francis Storr, M.A. (G.B.), 140.
- — — and Registration in Germany, Fr. Burchardt (Germany), 147.
- — — Women Teachers and their Salaries, Mrs Bryant (G.B.), 146.
- Stellenbosch, Cape Colony, Victorian College and other Educational establishments at, 87.
- Stetson, Mrs Charlotte Perkins (U.S.), on Parental Responsibility in the earliest years of Childhood, 12.
- Stevenson, Mrs Flora (G.B.), in the Chair, School Section, First Session, opening remarks, 40
- on the Training of Pupil Teachers in Scotland, 184.
- Stockholm, Sweden, Sloyd Exhibition in, 48.
- University of, 72, *sic*.
- Storr, Mr Francis, M.A. (G.B.), Registration and Status of Teachers, 140.
- Strathcona, Lord, endowment to McGill University, Canada, 83.
- Sweden, Co-Education in Schools in, Fru J. Palmgren (Sweden), 160.
- Technical Education in, Fru Hierta-Retzius (Sweden), 129.
- Universities in, Women at the, Fröken Lydia Wahlstrom, Ph.D. (Sweden), 72.

TEACHERS, *see also* Pupil Teachers and Status.

- Elementary, in Italian rural Schools, difficulties of, Dr Maria Montessori (Italy), on, 51.
- of Games, Trained Ladies needed as, 190.
- Registration and Status of, Mr Francis Storr, M.S. (G.B.), 140.
- Training of, Section, Miss Alice Woods, in the Chair, opening remarks, 173.
- Miss A. J. Cooper (G.B.), 173.
- (Belgium), Nellie Carter (Belgium), 180.
- in Domestic Economy (G.B.), Miss Ella Pycroft (G.B.), 191.
- elementary and pupil teachers, Miss E. P. Hughes (G.B.), on, 180.
- (in France), for Special Subjects, Mme. Marion (France), 185.
- in the United States, Miss Kinne (U.S.), on, 187.
- under the London School Board, and their training, 50.
- Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York, 63.
- Guild Bill, Great Britain, 141.
- Training Syndicate, 177.
- and Registration Society, 177.
- Teaching of Mentally and Physically Defective Children, Mrs Burgwin (G.B.), 35.

- Teaching of Mentally and Physically Defective Children, Hon. Maude Stanley (G.B.), *ib.*
- — — — — Dr Francis Warner (G.B.), on, *ib.*
- Technical Education Section (*see also* Domestic, Manual, etc.), Miss F. L. Calder (G.B.), in the Chair, opening remarks, 109.
- — — — — (in Australia), Frau Marianne Hainisch (Austria), 116.
- — — — — (in Canada), Mrs Hoodless (Canada), 127.
- — — — — (in Germany), Frau Hedwig Heyl (Germany), 110.
- — — — — Present Position of, in Domestic Science, Mrs Mary E. Playne (G.B.), 113.
- — — — — (in Sweden), Fru Hierta-Retzius (Sweden), 129.
- — — — — Industrial Education, causes of difficulty in securing, Mrs Field (G.B.), on, 137.
- — — — — its proper object, Mrs Humphrey Owen (G.B.), on, 137.
- — — — — Teachers, Training of, and need of better organisation, Miss A. Brown, on, 138.
- Tews, Herr, Germany, 111.
- Tolerance in Education, 188.
- Toronto, (Canada), Colleges and Universities of, in relation to Women, 83.
- Training of Child Life on the Kindergarten System, Elinor A. Welldon (G.B.), 29.
- — — — — Colleges, test of good, Miss Agnes Ward on, 184.
- — — — — of Teachers Section, *see* Teachers and Technical.
- Traversi, Antonio, Italy, 148.
- Trinity College, Dublin, in relation to Women, 79.
- Turkey, Education of Women in, Dr Mary Mills Patrick (Turkey), 65.
- UNITED STATES, Co-Education in Universities in, Dean Louise Brownell (U.S.), 167.
- — — — — Education in, Mrs Maitland (U.S.), on, 52.
- — — — — excellence of, Mr A. P. Gray (G.B.), on, 49.
- — — — — Mrs Hoodless (Canada), on, *ib.*
- — — — — Manual Training in Primary Schools in, Mrs Stanton Blatch (U.S.), 40.
- — — — — Modern Educational Experiments, Vacation Schools, Miss Sadie American (U.S.), 92.
- — — — — The Working Man's School, New York City, Mrs Felix Adler (U.S.), 90.
- — — — — Training of Teachers in Domestic Science, Miss Kinne (U.S.), on, 184.
- — — — — Universities in, in relation to Women, 167.
- Universities Section, Miss Emily Davies (G.B.), in the Chair, 68, concluding remarks on University Extension, 89.
- — — — — Co-Education in (in the United States), Dean Louise Brownell (U.S.), 167.
- — — — — in Great Britain and Ireland (in relation to Women), Miss Louisa Innes Lumsden (G.B.), 78.
- — — — — in Italy, in relation to Women, 147.
- — — — — Place of Women in, University Degrees and, Prof. Patrick Geddes, F.R.S.E. (G.B.), 152.
- — — — — Swedish, Women at the, Fröken Lydia Wahlstrom, Ph.D. (Sweden), 72.
- University Degrees (for) Women Educators, Miss Charlotte Ross (Canada), 143.
- — — — — and the Place of Women in Universities, Prof. Patrick Geddes, F.R.S.E. (G.B.), 152.

- University Education for Women in Austria, Fr. Levetus (Austria), on, 78.
 ———— in Denmark, Fru Dagmar Hjort, B.A. (Denmark), 76.
 ———— in the United States, 167.
 ———— Extension in Denmark, 77.
 ———— work in Great Britain, Miss Emily Davies (G.B.), on, 89.
 ———— training open to Women at Copenhagen, 77.
 Upsala University, Sweden, Women Students in, 72.
- VACATION Schools in the United States, Miss Sadie American (U.S.), 93.
 Verein Frauenbildung-Frauenstudium, Germany, work of, 56.
 Victoria College, Toronto, Canada, in relation to Women, 64.
 ———— University, Great Britain, in relation to Women, 79.
 Vienna, *see* Austria.
- WAHLSTROM, Fröken Lydia, Ph.D., Sweden, Women at the Swedish Universities, 72.
- Wales, Secondary Education in, equality of the sexes under, Mrs Humphrey Owen (G.B.), on, 67.
 ———— Training Colleges in, 178.
 ———— Universities of in relation to Women, 79.
- Ward, Miss Agnes (G.B.), on the test of a good Training College, 187.
 ———— Mrs Walter (G.B.), (*née* Emily Lord), The Kindergarten as a Character-Builder (A Retrospect and a Forecast), 33.
 ———— on the same, and on the training of Kindergarten Teachers and Students, 107.
- Warner, Dr Francis, M.D., F.R.C.P. (G.B.), on the Teaching of Mentally and Physically Defective Children, 85.
- Weiss, Mrs Spence (G.B.), the General Effect of Games, 194.
- Welldon, Miss Elinor A., Head Mistress, Cheltenham Ladies' College Kindergarten Training Department (G.B.), Child Life and Training on the Kindergarten System, 29.
- Wellington College, Cape Colony, 88.
- Wilson, Mrs A. Carus (G.B.), on the Education of Daughters, 38, and on their influence, 39.
 ———— in discussion on Universities, *unreported*, 89.
- Windscheid, Fr. Dr Kaethe (Germany), Educational work of, 57.
- Women as Educators Section, Miss Maitland (G.B.), in the Chair, opening remarks, 139.
 ———— University Degrees, Miss Charlotte Ross (Canada), 148.
 ———— Education of in Turkey, Dr Mary Mills Patrick (Turkey), 65.
 ———— Students' Clubs, Copenhagen, 77.
 ———— at Italian Universities, Prof. Dr Pauline Schiff (Italy), 147.
 ———— at Universities in Great Britain, Miss Annie Rogers (G.B.) on, 85.
 ———— at the Swedish Universities, Fröken Lydia Wahlstrom (Sweden), 72.
 ———— Teachers in Co-operative Schools (Denmark), Status of, Fru Nielsen (Denmark), on, 172.
- Women Teachers in Scotland, position of, Miss Lumsden (G.B.), on, 171.
- Women's Clubs in New York in relation to the Vacation Schools, 94.
 ———— Faults, Games as calculated to combat, 195.
 ———— Training Society, Germany, work of, 111.
- Wood, Miss (G.B.), on the risk of awakening Self-consciousness in Children, 6.
- Woodhouse, Mrs (G.B.), in the Chair, School Section, Second Session, Secondary Education, opening remarks, 53.

- Woods, Miss Alice, in the Chair, Training of Teachers Section, opening remarks on the above and on Secondary Education, 173.
- Work Cottages for Children in Sweden founded by Fru Hierta-Retzius (Sweden), 131.
- Working Classes, Kindergartens for the, Mms. Michaelis, President of the Fröbel Institution, London, (G.B.), 31.
- Man's School, The, of New York City, Mrs Felix Adler (U.S.), 90.
- YALE University, United States, in relation to Women, 168.
- Youngman, Miss (G.B.), late Head Mistress of Ipswich High School for Girls, on the possible effects of Modern Educational Systems, 17.
- Yuerrier, Prof., founder of Women's Lectures in Moscow, 76.

END OF VOL. II.