

THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

BY H.R.H. PRINCESS CHRISTIAN.

THE following valuable article, which appeared last week in our esteemed contemporary, the *Queen*, will be read with the greatest interest by all Nurses.

"I was asked some months ago to write something for this paper, and was prevented from doing so. Since then the kind request has been repeated. I have been thinking a great deal about what I should write, and it has struck me that a few words about women's technical education would not be out of place. It is a subject, I am glad to find, which is beginning to occupy a good deal of attention. Far be it from my intention to say one word in disparagement of the higher education of women, which must raise the tone of women's minds and develop their mental faculties; but I do feel that there is a tendency to carry such education too far, and to think no knowledge worth having which does not vie with that of men. I have always held that there is a great danger in this, first of all because I think it is a short-sighted policy. Those women who are forced by circumstances to earn their daily bread, seem to think that there is no field open to them but in competing with men on their ground, with the disastrous effect of adding to the overcrowded market, and thereby necessarily lowering the rate of remuneration. Secondly, I feel most strongly all that we women lose by attempting rivalry with men. We lose sight of all we might be, and of the very high position we could and should hold in this world, by struggling to be a weaker imitation of them. Exceptions only prove the rule. That small section of women whose minds are pre-eminently adapted for classical and mathematical learning, to them every facility ought to be given to train their best faculties, and enable them to reap their due reward.

"There is a view of technical education which I should like to mention, as I think it is often overlooked, that is, the reason why home teaching, which in former days used to be handed down from mother to daughter, can now be taught to so much greater advantage in schools. Knowledge has so much increased, and the art of imparting it, that experts are needed to teach it accurately and well. For example, hygiene has become a modern science, absolutely necessary for every woman to study, in order that her house may be a healthy habitation. Gastronomy in its widest sense is a science. The choice and preparation of food suitable to climates and

seasons, ages and constitutions, should be carefully studied and known. These subjects were but very imperfectly, if at all, understood by our ancestors. Much domestic work which was formerly learnt and practised at home is now handed over to special workers, and has become to be considered as a separate trade; for instance, laundry work, &c.

"There is no doubt that farmers' wives and daughters are quite different from those of fifty years ago; they no longer manage their own dairy and poultry, nor do they educate their daughters to take part in these domestic arts. It is the age we live in which is partly to blame for these changes; it is impossible, nor could one wish, to stem the current; the true wisdom lies in directing it wisely, and not shutting one's eyes to the attendant evils. Progress is inevitable, and therefore desirable. Let women be duly qualified, and let them choose discreetly their paths of usefulness.

"This idea of sound technical training is no longer a mere dream, for a college has come under my own personal notice of which I am president, and in which I am much interested, which was founded for this purpose. I believe this is not the only instance of such an institution. This scheme was set on foot by Miss Forsyth, daughter of Sir Douglas Forsyth. She began it on a very small scale, feeling her way, and only enlarging it as she saw it succeed. Her wish has not been to revolutionise the existing systems of female education, or to supplant any of them; but on the contrary to supplement them, intending the teaching in her school to be a course which girls should go through after they have passed the higher examinations, and the groundwork is laid for the duties of practical life. Miss Forsyth is most anxious that her school should not become a mere fashionable novelty, and her object is to give real solid training. To use her own words: 'To combine thoroughness of teaching with speed in learning, and so concede as far as possible to the convenience of an economical and hurry-loving public. My original idea was to start a school where every girl, when she leaves the high or ordinary boarding school, might for six months learn those things which would best fit her for her home life before she is called upon to plunge into society, or a profession, or marriage, and where her brain would have that true recreation which exists best in change of occupation and not in mere idleness.'

"I quite agree with Miss Forsyth that the advocates for brain culture have rather too much faith in the power of book learning, and in the theory that a highly-educated woman ought to be able to turn her hand to anything. 'I am

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)