

time he is fourteen or fifteen it is necessary that he should decide on a profession, and subsequently his studies are directed accordingly.

It is just this direction which would be of the utmost value to a girl, and which is almost wholly lacking; consequently, as a rule diligently, but more or less aimlessly, she pursues her studies until the age of seventeen or eighteen, when she is supposed to be "finished," and if she is not compelled to earn her living she returns home, when, if she does not happen to be of a studious turn of mind and to keep up a habit of reading, she speedily forgets much of the limited amount of knowledge she has acquired.

It is an extraordinary fact that many parents, while they would consider themselves falling short of their parental duty if they did not equip their sons for the battle of life by educating them to earn their own living, feel no such responsibility with regard to their daughters. Yet, setting aside the fact that most women when they arrive at adult life are happier in a sphere of their own, if parents consider the future seriously at all they must realise that nowadays it is essential for most girls to have a means of livelihood. The parents who can settle on their daughters a sufficient sum to bring them in an income of at least £120—£150 per annum are comparatively few; in most cases all the available capital has gone in the education of the boys. But if they cannot do this, then it is essential that the girls should go out into the world to earn their own living, if they are not to be condemned to penury in middle life and old age. It is no use their attempting to make a living then. The struggle is hard enough for expert workers; the labour market has no place for untrained middle-aged women.

There is, of course, another alternative, namely, marriage. It looms large in the horizon of most parents in their calculations with regard to their daughters, and is responsible for much of their apparent irresponsibility with regard to the future of girls. Marriage is natural and right, they say.

Granted that a happy marriage, both for men and women, is desirable, it is surely unwise to base so important a decision as that of a girl's future on her chances of matrimony. Besides, it does not need elaborate calculations to know that, in this country at least, for many women matrimony is an impossibility. Moreover, which is the more likely to make a success of marriage—the girl who has a profession at her back, and who therefore seriously considers the step she is taking before giving up a life full of interests and happiness, or the one who has been taught to look forward to matrimony as the one means of providing herself with an assured income?

Until women place marriage on the same plane as men as an influence in determining

their career, so long shall we have girls accepting their first offer of marriage as the lesser choice of evils, and the inevitable result in many cases will be unhappiness.

Putting marriage, then, out of the question for the time being, and assuming that a girl has an inclination towards nursing, how can her education be directed so as to be of use to her subsequently? By all means let it include one or more foreign languages. To the private nurse nowadays French is a valuable asset. Then rudimentary Latin will also be of great use to her. She is required, as a nurse, to be able to read the patients' head-boards intelligently; and the directions as to prescriptions, though they may not be couched in classical terms, are still in Latin. Anatomy, physiology, hygiene, economics as they affect the community, and bacteriology may also with advantage be included in her studies. Do you say that this is too much to require of her, and that you like your girl to be practical? Then, oh, mother! see to it that she can turn out a room, that she knows how to handle a broom, to keep glass and china dainty and bright, and that she can cook an appetising meal. None of these accomplishments, as a rule, does the daughter of the domestic woman possess. They all have to be taught her in the time which should be devoted to special training. See to it, moreover, that she is expert with her needle. The modern girl, as a rule, is not. Yet she must be deft-handed if she is to pad splints properly, to prepare the many dressings now required in hospitals, and to keep ward linen in good order. In short, give her a thoroughly practical education, and when she enters a nurse-training school she will be able to profit to the full by the professional education she receives, and go on to higher things. Is it too much to hope that, if she aspires to the superintendence of a large nurse-training school, in days to come she will need a university degree as well as a teacher's diploma? Training-schools for nurses are essentially educational centres, and all the prizes in the educational world are held by women having a university degree or its equivalent. If the authorities of our great nurse-training schools let it be known that, other things being equal, candidates for the post of Matron holding a university degree would have precedence, they would not only eliminate many candidates from a lengthy list, but would also obtain a woman of culture—surely a great desideratum—as their superintendent of nursing, and, further, they would place their nursing-school on its rightful plane, namely, on the educational one.

MARGARET BREAY.

The Governor of Malta on Monday presented the Royal Red Cross and the Queen's South African War medal to Mrs. Osborne Howe, who organised a series of soldiers' homes during the war.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)