FEMALE EDUCATION AS REFLECTED IN VICTORIAN FICTION.

by

MARY FERN FIELDS BEELER

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Division of Graduate Instruction
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FOREWORD

While I was studying at Columbia University, this subject, Female Education As Reflected In Victorian Fiction, was suggested to me as the basis for a thesis. Since for a number of years I have been interested in the emancipation of womankind, this particular phase of that subject appealed to me. Most of my research concerning the history of education of girls was done at Columbia University; the remainder has been carried on at Butler University, and it has been a most pleasant and interesting work.

I have confined this research to the chief novelists of the period, and have not attempted to include every novel which may deal with this subject. However, I was unable to procure some writings which I feel should have been considered.

I wish to thank Dr. John S. Harrison for many helpful suggestions. I also wish to acknowledge my appreciation of the cooperation of Miss Catherine Nelson, Miss Edna Miller, and Miss Emily Helming, of the Library Staff.

Mary Fern Fields Beeler.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY; EDUCATION OF WOMEN PRIOR TO THE VICTORIAN ERA.

Enduring literature is said to be an outcome of the times that produced it. Conversely, it may be said to be an open door into the life and place where it originated. Entering this open door into the Victorian period, it is my purpose to show to what extent one phase of that life is mirrored there.

The Victorian Era was marked by great social unrest, followed by gradual political, social, and economic reform; so it is not surprising to see the appearance, during this time, of the political novel, the religious novel, and the novel of social justice. Throughout all these runs the thread of education, for, after all, it is only through education that enduring reform is realized. This period in English history marks the greatest growth in the educational system that the country has ever experienced. While all classes of people benefited by these reforms, it is the changed conception of the education of girls and women, and their enlarged educational opportunities, that, in my opinion, merit more consideration than they have hitherto been given. It is with these

that I propose to deal.

Throughout the fiction of this period the story of this educational advancement is found. As it has not been possible to include in this survey every author who deals with this subject, the works of the chief novelists, together with the best examples from some of the lesser novelists serve to develop this idea.

Before considering the education of girls and women in the nineteenth century, and observing how it is reflected in the fiction of that period, it is well to make a brief survey of such conditions prior to that time.

Since woman by nature was destined to be the mother of the race, it followed in the inhospitable environment that prevailed until modern times, that her work should center about the home, whether that home be cave, tent, hut, or palace. The undeveloped state of industry, together with the crystallization of the folkways are responsible for the perpetuation of this domestic system that has held woman in the subordinate position. Literature, from the ancient time to the present, is replete with examples of the "place" of woman in the economic and social scheme. The Greek idea is shown in the words of a Greek husband of Socrates' day speaking of his girl-wife: "The Gods have plainly adapted the nature of woman for works and duties within doors . . . (Therefore) it will certainly be necessary for you to remain at home".[1] Even in the Chris-

1. Paul Monroe, Source Book in the History of Education for the Greek and Roman Period, Macmillan & Co., New York, 1909, p. 41.

tian teachings of the New Testament we read: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp the authority over the man, but to be in silence."[1] In fact, the position of woman is summed up pretty accurately in the following statement:

> The ideal of womanhood through the ages has been a modest, docile, clinging creature, trained in home-keeping arts, with physical charms sufficient to compensate for an empty mind, and with unlimited capacity for selfimmolation. It followed that education of an intellectual sort played but a small part in the woman's life.[2]

While this was true of women in general, the women of the nobility in England did receive some education. In the sixteenth century the standard of learning for this class was very high; private tutors were employed and instruction was given in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, music, dancing, and theology. Queen Elizabeth herself received this type of instruction. There was no education, however, for girls below nobility.

The seventeenth century was characterized in England by civil wars, lax morals, indifference to high aims and learning, and religious fanaticism. Women's education took a more feminine tone; music, dancing, needle-work and a little French and Italian were studied by girls of the upper classes. There were no good scholars.

By the eighteenth century everything was ruled by conven-

1. The Bible, I Timothy, 2:11, 12.
2. Willystine Goodsell, The Education of Woman, Macmillan & Co., New York, 1923, p. 7.

tionality; religion was a matter of formalism; there was more material than intellectual improvement. There was general apathy towards women's education; most women were taught to sham, and were shallow and affected. During the second half of the century boarding schools began to attract daughters of the middle class, but there was no gain educationally as only a veneer was acquired. The wealthy sent their girls to convents in France. Since the eighteenth century worshipped idleness, the wealthy girls were brought up with that idea as the main object in life. A lady of learning was ridiculed, so women dared not show any intellectual curiosity. Until this false notion of work could be broken down, the education of women could not advance.

As for the women of the poorer classes, the last half of the century saw the first change in the rigid social system in which for ages they had lived. With the substitution of machinery for hand work, and with the entrance of women into industrial life outside the home, the transformation of woman's life began. For when women became wage earners, they took the first step toward economic independence and this released them from that age-long financial dependence upon man which, more than any other contributory cause, had been responsible for their social and intellectual subordination. During the nineteenth century, England began to enact legislation emancipating women in an economic and legal way. The principles of democracy, of liberality and equality, began

to be applied to daughters as well as sons. The seeds sowed in the eighteenth century were harvested in the nineteenth, when a more generous spirit with respect to the intellectual training of womankind began to prevail.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION OF GIRLS OF THE UPPER CLASSES.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw little change in the conception of what a young society lady's education should consist. The emphasis was still on the superficial; beyond the ability to read and write, there must be a smattering of French, drawing, dancing and music, with more or less skill in doing fancy needlework. Educating the surface, as Mrs. General believed in Little Dorrit, was the acme of perfection. Dickens said that she "varnished" the surface so that it might receive the proper society polish. According to her theory, young ladies should never be so unladylike as to have great purposes or great ideas; neither should they be allowed to know that there was anything vulgar or wrong in the world, as such a knowledge would "stand in the way of that graceful equanimity of surface which is so expressive of good breeding, it hardly seems compatible with refinement of mind. A truly refined mind will seem to be ignorant of the existence of anything that is not perfectly proper, placid, and pleasant". Mrs. General is also well remembered for her famous advice to Amy Dorrit regarding the proper way for her to address her father:

> "Papa is a preferable mode of address," observed Mrs. General. "Father is rather vulgar, my dear. The word papa, besides, gives a pretty form to the lips. Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms are all very good words for the lips; especially prunes and prisms. You will find it serviceable, in the formation of a demeanour, if you sometimes say to yourself in company - on entering a room, for instance - papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms, prunes and prisms".[1]

Little girls were clothed in miniature copies of their mothers' gowns, and in like manner, were required also to measure up to adult standards of behavior. A pitiful picture is presented in the "premature little woman of thirteen years old" instructed by Tom Pinch's sister. She had already "arrived at such a pitch of whalebone and education that she had nothing girlish about her, which was a source of great rejoicing to all her relations and friends."[2]

Dickens, the great champion of childhood, illustrates in the life of Edith Dombey the evils of such a system of forcing adulthood upon children. When Edith reproached her mother for almost compelling her to marry Mr. Dombey, her mother asked her angrily:

> "What do you mean? Haven't you from a child - - -" "A child!" said Edith, looking at her; "when was I a child? What childhood did you ever leave to me? I was a woman - - - artful, designing, mercenary, laying snares for men - - - before I knew myself or you, or even understood the base and wretched aim of every new display I learned. You gave birth to a woman. Look upon her. She is in her pride tonight . . . . Oh, Mother, if you had but left to me my natural heart when I

1. Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, Bigelow, Brown and Co. Inc., New York, p. 478.
2. Charles Dickens, Martin Chizzlewit, Bigelow, Brown and Co., Inc., New York, p. 141.

> too was a girl . . . how different I might have been."[1]

Of course such a system of training was for the sole purpose of making what was considered a successful marriage. In The Newcomes, Thackeray ridicules this practice of mothers who think the whole aim in life of their daughters is to make a good match. He says:

> And as for the women . . . . did you ever see anything so curious, monstrous, and amazing, as the way in which women court Princekin when he is marriageable, and pursue him with their daughters? Who was the British nobleman in old, old days who brought his three daughters to the King of Mercia, that his majesty might choose one after inspection? Mercia was but a petty province, and its king in fact a Princekin. Ever since those extremely ancient and venerable times the custom exists not only in Mercia, but in all the rest of the provinces inhabited by the Angles, and before Princeking the daughters of our nobles are trotted out.[2]

Thackeray is referring especially to the determined way in which Lady Kew pursued Lord Farintosh to get him for her favorite granddaughter, Ethel Newcome. They had followed him first to Scotland, then to Paris, then to an English country house. In describing a young lady of fashion in the person of Ethel, Thackeray explains as follows:

> A girl of the world, bon Dieu! the doctrine with which she begins is that she is to have a wealthy husband; the article of Faith in her catechism is, "I believe in elder sons, and a house in town, and a house in the country!" They are mercenary as they step fresh and blooming into the

1. Dickens, Dombey & Son, Chapman & Hall, London, 1879, Vol. I, p. 411.
2. W. M. Thackeray, The Newcomes, Aldine Book Pub. Co., Boston, p. 159.

> world out of the nursery. They have been schooled there to keep their bright eyes to look only on the Price or the Duke, Croesus and Dives. By long cramping and careful process, their little natural hearts have been squeezed up, like the feet of their fashionable little sisters in China. As you all see a pauper's child, with an awful premature knowledge of the pawnshop, able to haggle at market with her wretched half-pence, and battle bargains at huckster's stalls, you shall find a young beauty, who was a child in the schoolroom a year since, as wise and knowing as the old practitioners in keeping back or producing her beautiful wares, as skilful in settling one bidder against another, as keen as the smartest merchant in Vanity Fair.[1]

However, Ethel Newcome showed unaccustomed independence of thought for that time, and rebelled against her conniving old grandmother, finally refusing to go on the "auction block" any more. It is rather in the person of Rosey, Clive Newcome's pretty, vain, silly, little wife that we get a true picture of the product of the superficial training then customary. She was interested only in finery and her baby ways. When Clive and his father, the Colonel, lost their fortune, it is not surprising that Rosey failed utterly to rise to the occasion. According to her mother, who was her constant companion and manager, she described "darling Rosey's delicate state, poor thing - nursed with tenderness and in the lap of luxury - brought up with every delicacy and the fondest mother - never knowing in the least how to take care of herself, and likely to fall down and perish unless the kind Campaigner (her mother) were by to prop and protect her."[2]

1. Thackeray, The Newcomes, p. 74.
2. Ibid., p. 343.

The heartless, and impersonal manner in which this matrimonial game was played is seen also in Agnes Grey. There, the eighteen-year-old Miss Murray entertained herself by telling the governess, Agnes, all about her Coming Out Ball and the conquests she had made.

> "But the one I'm to have, I suppose, if I'm doomed to have any of them, is Sir Thomas Ashby."
> "Surely not, if he's so wicked, and you dislike him?"
> "Oh, I don't mind his being wicked; he's all the better for that; and as for disliking him - I shouldn't greatly object to being Lady Ashby of Ashby Park, if I must marry. But if I could be always young, I would be always single. I should like to enjoy myself thoroughly, and conquet with all the world, till I am on the verge of being called an old maid; and then, to escape the infamy of that, after having made ten thousand conquests, to break all their hearts save one, by marrying some high-born, rich, indulgent husband, whom, on the other-hand, fifty ladies were dying to have."[1]

In fact, to be an old maid was the worst possible fate that could befall a girl. In Shirley the opinion was:

> Old maids, like the houseless and unemployed poor, should not ask for a place and an occupation in the world: the demand disturbs the happy and rich: it disturbs parents. Look at the numerous families of girls in the neighborhood: the Armitages, the Birtwhistles, the Skyeses. The brothers of these girls are everyone in business or in professions; they have something to do: their sisters have no earthly employment but household work and sewing; no earthly pleasure but an unprofitable visiting, and no hope, in all their life to come, of anything better.[2]

The four Willis sisters in Sketches by Boz were consid-

1. Anne Bronte, Agnes Grey, Bigelow, Brown and Co., New York, p. 434.
2. Charlotte Bronte, Shirley, p. 350.

ered by their neighbors as being "beyond all human hope".

> The neighbors called and found the house the perfection of neatness - and so were the four Miss Willises. Everything was formal, stiff, and cold - so were the four Miss Willises. Not a single chair was ever seen out of its place - not a single Miss Willis was ever seen out of hers. There they always sat in the same places, doing precisely the same things at the same hour. The eldest Miss Willis used to knit, the second to draw, the two others to play duets on the piano. They seemed to have no separate existence, but to have made up their minds just to winter through life together.[1]

With marriage the only career open to girls, it is not surprising to find their education of such a nature as to cultivate their "charms", rather than their minds.

A few of the girls of the upper classes were educated in boarding schools in France. Miss Blanche Amory in Pendennis, represents such a fashionable young lady. She had received most of her education at Madame de Caramel's boarding-school in Paris. While the training there had been sound, and she was "accomplished" in the real meaning of the word, her training had also caused some peculiarities or defects in her character. She was a young lady of genius, Thackeray says, of exquisite attainments and considerable literary ability, living, like many another genius, with relatives who could not comprehend her.

> Neither her mother nor her step-father were persons of a literary turn; Lady Clavering wrote like a school-girl of thirteen, and with

1. Dickens, Sketches by Boz, Bigelow, Brown and Co., New York, p. 19.

> an extraordinary disregard to grammar and spelling. And as Miss Amory felt very keenly that she was not appreciated, and that she lived with persons who were not her equals in intellect or conversational power, she lost no opportunity to acquaint her family circle with their inferiority to herself.
>
> If Lady Clavering talked about Sparragrass instead of Asparagus, or called an object a hobject, . . . Missy calmly corrected her, and frightened the good soul, her mother, into errors only the more frequent as she grew more nervous under her daughter's eye.[1]

The education of most young ladies of the upper classes was carried on by governesses and boarding schools. The governesses were very poorly trained as no schools existed for that purpose. Most of them were members of genteel families in reduced circumstances, and had probably received the little training they did have at some boarding school of a semi-charity nature. Such, at least, was the case of the three Bronte sisters. Since they felt the necessity of earning their own living, both Charlotte and Anne took positions as governesses (Emily was too unhappy when away from home to accept such a position) and later told of their experiences in <u>Jane Eyre</u> and <u>Agnes Grey</u>. When Jane advertises for a position as governess she states her qualifications as the ability to "teach the usual branches of a good English education, together with French, Drawing and Music" and then adds in parenthesis, "in those days, dear reader, this now narrow catalogue of accomplishments would have been held tolerably comprehensive."[2]

1. Thackeray, <u>Pendennis</u>, Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1901, pp. 220, 221.
2. Charlotte Bronte, <u>Jane Eyre</u>, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1937, p. 100.

When Charlotte was a governess in the home of Mrs. Sidgwick she wrote to Emily that it was a beautiful place, but that her life was one of intolerable slavery. She wrote:

> She cares nothing in the world about me except to contrive how the greatest possible quantity of labour may be squeezeed out of me, and to that end she overwhelms me with oceans of needlework . . . . I see more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfill.[1]

But it is in Agnes Grey that a complete account is given of the duties and trials of a governess. When Agness went as governess to the Murray country estate, Mrs. Murray soon made it plain that she considered it the duty of a governess to "form a young lady's taste". She said:

> I have known governesses who have so completely identified themselves with the reputation of their young ladies for elegance and propriety in mind and manners that . . . to hear the slightest blame imputed to their pupils was worse than to be censured in their own persons. . . . The judicious governess knows this: she knows that, while she lives in obscurity herself, her pupils' virtues and defects will be open to every eye; and that, unless she loses sight of herself in their cultivation, she need not hope for success.[2]

In order to have her charges arrive at such a state, Agnes said that it was necessary for her to strive to "amuse and oblige, instruct, refine, and polish" with the least possible exertion on their part and no exercise of authority on her own. Her working hours varied to suit the whims of the

1. E. F. Benson, Charlotte Bronte, Longmans, Green and Co., London, New York, Toronto, 1933, p. 66.
2. Anne Bronte, op. cit., p. 509.

children. All her meals were taken with her pupils at such times as suited their fancy. The hours of study were the same; sometimes determined to get the "plaguy business over before breakfast", they would send a maid to call her at half-past five. After dressing hurriedly, she would come down to an empty schoolroom to find they had changed their minds. Their inattentive attitude toward their lessons was another trial which Agnes had to endure. She says,

> While receiving my instructions they would lounge upon the sofa, lie on the rug, stretch, yawn, talk to each other, or look out of the window; whereas, I could not so much as stir the fire, or pick up the handkerchief I had dropped without being rebuked for inattention by one of my pupils, or told that mamma would not like me to be so careless.[1]

But perhaps the worst trial was in trying to teach and control head-strong children without any punishment or rewards. With another family for whom she was governess, Agnes had charge of three small children aged four, six, and seven. She soon found that the name of governess was mere mockery when applied to her as her pupils "had no more notion of obedience than a wild, unbroken colt". The only way she could manage Master Tom when in a tantrum was to throw him on his back and hold his hands and feet till his frenzy had abated. The stubbornness of Mary Ann was a great trial, as was the habit of falsehood and deception in Fanny. Of course all these bad traits were laid to the governess who was told as much in the

1. A. Bronte, _op_. _cit_., pp. 380-386.

presence of the children.[1] In fact, her only prospect of any peace was at night when her tormentors had gone to bed.

Even the servants, seeing in what little esteem the governess was held by both the parents and children, regulated their behavior by the same standard; they entirely neglected her comfort, despised her requests, and slighted her directions.[2] At church, none of the ladies or gentlemen who had visited at Horton Lodge spoke to Agnes, and even the clergyman himself, although he hurried from the pulpit to help the wife and daughters of the squire into their carriage, shut her out, and left the footman to put her in. In fact, she says,

> I sometimes felt myself degraded by the life I led, and ashamed of submitting to so many indignities; and sometimes I thought myself a fool for caring so much about them.[3]

Tom Pinch sums it all up very neatly when he replies to the accusation that his sister did not have control over her pupils:

> No man can expect his children to respect what he degrades . . . When you tell me . . . that my sister has no innate power of commanding the respect of your children, I must tell you that it is not so. . . . When you place her at a disadvantage in reference to every servant in your house, how can you suppose that she is not in a tenfold worse position in reference to your daughters? . . . Respect! I believe young people are quick enough to observe and imitate; and why or how should they respect whom no one else respects, and

1. A. Bronte, _op. cit._, p. 425.
2. _Ibid._, p. 436.
3. _Ibid._, p. 425.

> everybody slights? And very partial they must grow - - Oh, very partial! - - to their studies, when they see to what a pass proficiency in those same tasks has brought their governess![1]

Even if not actually mistreated or imposed upon, the life of a governess was anything but a happy one, as was the case of Catherine who had gone "to teach Mrs. Butler's children a great many things she had never learnt herself". She was only nineteen, and eager to make her living. She worked very hard, "struggled bravely in her feeble way". The Butlers were very kind to her, but she lived by herself in the big, busy house, dreaming and longing for the companionship and sympathy which she did not receive.[2]

On the whole, instruction by governesses was the most satisfactory plan, especially for the young children, as most people of any means at all sent their older daughters away to boarding schools.

In fact, boarding schools were such an established institution that the fiction of the time is replete with descriptions of various types of such schools. However, they might be roughly divided into two classes: The semi-charity boarding schools, and the fashionable finishing schools. The latter were great forcing-houses of accomplishments where education was "finished". They were only for the upper classes

1. Dickens, <u>Martin Chuzzlewit</u>, pp. 572, 573.
2. Lady Anne Thackery Ritchie, <u>The Village on the Cliff</u>, Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1867, p. 42.

as their "selectness" made them prohibitive of others.[1] The subjects taught were anything but profound, and the methods used were very superficial. "That our daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple,"[2] was taken to mean the shining veneer of superficiality nicely pasted on. Out-door exercise was confined to formal promenade during which the girls had to hold themselves in a stiff, erect attitude and keep a regular pace. Fear of singularity kept girls from studying the classics and mathematics, or diving below the surface in any subject. In higher classes the claims of society, and in middle classes the claims of the household, regulated the amount and quality of their education. Only governesses pursued studies further and then not much further.[3]

A scathing denunciation of such schools and their products is seen in a book written by a woman of that period:

> When we meet in society with that speechless, inanimate, ignorant, and useless being called a young lady just home from school, it is thought a sufficient apology for all her deficiencies that she has, poor thing! but just come home from school. Thus implying that nothing in the line of domestic usefulness, social intercourse, or adaptation to circumstances, can be expected from her until she has had time to learn it.[4]

1. C. S. Bremner, Ed. of Girls and Women in Great Britain, Swan and Sonnenschein, London, 1897, p. 73.
2. Bible, Psalm 144:12.
3. Georgiana Hill, Women in English Life, 2. Vol. Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1896, Vol. II, p. 133.
4. Mrs. Ellis, The Women of England, Fisher and Son, London, 1839, p. 79.

In regard to the physical effect of such a system of education upon the girls, this same author writes:

> The number of languid, listless and inert young ladies, who now recline upon sofas, murmuring at every claim upon their personal exertions, is to me a truly melancholy spectacle, and is one which demands the attention of a benevolent and enlightened public, even more, perhaps, than some of those great national schemes in which people and government are alike interested. It is but rarely now that we meet with a really healthy woman.[1]

It is interesting also to note the opinion of a man writing at the same time on the evils of the girls' schools: "I never yet saw a female who had unsexed herself by vice, caprice, pride or ill-temper, whose ruin could not be traced to bad treatment or bad education".[2]

Most of the novelists of the time exposed the superficialities of the finishing school, the affectation and incompetence of the teachers, the shallow subject-matter taught, and the effects of such a system upon the pupils. The letter which Miss Pinkerton wrote to Amelia Sedley's parents is very illuminating:

> "Madam,- After six years' residence at the Mall, I have the honour and happiness of presenting Miss Amelia Sedley to her parents, as a young lady not unworthy to occupy a fitting position in their polished and refined circle. Those virtues which characterise the young English gentlewoman, those accomplishments which become her birth and station, will not be found wanting in the amiable Miss

1. Mrs. Ellis, The Women of England, Fisher and Son, London, 1839, p. 83.
2. The Rev. Benjamin Parsons, The Mental and Moral Dignity of Woman, John Snow, London, 1842, Preface, p. 3.

> Sedley, whose <u>industry</u> and <u>obedience</u> have endeared her to her instructors, and whose delightful sweetness of temper has charmed her <u>aged</u> and <u>youthful</u> companions.
>
> "In music, in dancing, in orthography, in every variety of embroidery and needlework, she will be found to have realized her friends' <u>fondest wishes</u>. In geography there is still much to be desired; a careful and undeviating use of the backboard, for four hours daily during the next three years, is recommended as necessary to the acquirement of that dignified <u>deportment</u> and <u>carriage</u> so requisite for every young lady of fashion."[1]

It will be remembered that Miss Pinkerton's treatment and recommendation of Becky Sharp, pupil-teacher, was quite different from that accorded Amelia. Becky spoke French fluently, having been reared in France, and was forever deflating Miss Pinkerton's sense of importance by her sly jabs at that lady's ignorance of the language. Becky also committed the sacrilege of hurling in the face of the astonished teacher, the copy of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary which Miss Pinkerton considered the consummation of all knowledge, and which she bestowed as a parting gift upon her favorite pupils.

Another instance of the formal conventionality of most teachers in such schools is shown in the person of Miss Twinkleton who kept a "Seminary for Young Ladies". When the rumor of the quarrel between Neville Landless and Edwin Drood reached the seminary and began to cause dangerous excitement among the young ladies, Miss Twinkleton deemed it her duty to quiet their minds. Her stilted speech, interspersed with

1. Wm. Makepeace Thackeray, <u>Vanity Fair</u>, Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1898, p. 2.

digressions and interrupted by censure of inattentive girls, is a masterpiece of an illustration of the wrong way to handle a situation. Upon entering the room accompanied by her second in command, and saying the magic words, "Ladies", all the girls rose. Miss Twinkleton then proceeded to remark that

> Rumour, ladies, had been represented by the Bard of Avon - Needless were it to mention the immortal Shapespeare, also called the Swan of his native river, not improbably with some reference to the ancient superstition that that bird of graceful plumage (Miss Jennings will please stand upright) sung sweetly on the approach of death, for which we have no ornithological authority - Rumour, ladies, had been represented by that bard-hm! -
>
> "Who drew
> The celebrated Jew",
>
> as painted full of tongues. Rumour in Cloisterham (Miss Ferdinand will honour me with her attention) was no exception to the great limner's portrait of Rumour elsewhere. A slight fracas between two gentlemen occurring last night within a hundred miles of these peaceful walls (Miss Ferdinand, being apparently incorrigible, will have the kindness to write out this evening, in the original language, the first four fables of our vivacious neighbour, Monsieur La Fontaine) has been grossly exaggerated by Rumour's voice. In the first alarm and anxiety arising from our sympathy with a sweet young friend, not wholly to be dissociated from one of the gladiators in the bloodless arena in question (the impropriety of Miss Reymold's appearing to stab herself in the band with a pin is far too obvious, and too glaringly unladylike to be pointed out), we descended from our maiden elevation to discuss this uncongenial and this unfit theme. Responsible inquiries having assured us that it was but one of those "airy nothings" pointed at by the poet (whose name and date of birth Miss Giggles will supply within half an hour), we would now discard the subject, and concentrate our minds upon the grateful labours of

the day.[1]

In fact, any news had to be told first to Miss Twinkleton in order that anything objectionable might be retained by that "discreet filter". And yet, while posing as a model of propriety and wisdom, she shows herself utterly incapable of coping with the simpliest situations outside the schoolroom. When she arrives at Mrs. Billickin's with two cabs and seventeen trunks and boxes, Miss Twinkleton becomes so confused that she counts Mrs. Billickin in as one piece of luggage and not knowing to whom to pay her cab fare, paid Mrs. Billickin; the pupil saved the day by paying the driver and rescuing the flustered teacher from the scene of confusion.

Dickens also ridicules affectation in a teacher in Tom Tiddler's Ground. Here, he says Miss Pupford's assistant with the Parisian accent, might be regarded as some sort of inspired lady, for she never conversed with a Parisian, and she was never out of England.[2]

Minerva House was another typical finishing school where everything, including the furnishings of the house itself, was for effect. This school was kept by the two Misses Crumpton who were "very precise, had the strictest possible ideas of propriety, wore false hair, and always smelt very strongly of lavender". In this school some twenty girls of the

1. Charles Dickens, Edwin Drood, Bigelow, Brown and Co., Inc., New York, p. 96.
2. Charles Dickens, Christmas Stories, Bigelow, Brown and Co., Inc., New York, p. 393.

ages from thirteen to nineteen inclusive "acquired a knowledge of nothing; instruction in French and Italian, dancing lessons twice a week; and other necessaries of life". The windows were left partly open so as to impress the passer-by with a sense of the luxuries of the establishment; for there was a "front-parlour hung round with highly varnished maps which nobody ever looked at, and filled with books which no one ever read, appropriated exclusively to the reception of parents, who, whenever they called, could not fail to be struck with the very deep appearance of the place".[1]

A description of preparations for the half-yearly ball gives an idea of the importance attached to these infrequent social occasions:

> The evening came; and then there was such a lacing of stays, and tying of sandals, and dressing of hair, as never can take place with a proper degree of bustle outside of a boarding school. The smaller girls managed to be in everybody's way, and were pushed about accordingly; and the elder ones dressed, and tied, and flattered, and envied one another, as earnestly and sincerely as if they had actually _come out_.[2]

The common practise of exercising by the formal promenade is seen in _The Old Curiosity Shop_ when Little Nell goes with a message to Miss Monflathers school which was surrounded by a high wall with a large gate.

1. Dickens, _Sketches by Boz_, p. 407.
2. _Ibid_., p. 413.

> As Nell approached the awful door, it turned slowly upon its hinges with a creaking noise, and forth from the solemn grove beyond came a long file of young ladies, two and two, all with open books in their hands, and some with parasols likewise. And last of the goodly procession came Miss Monflathers, bearing herself a parasol of lilac silk, and supported by two smiling teachers, each mortally envious of the other, and devoted to Miss Monflathers.[1]

This was a school in which the young ladies were duly impressed with the dignity of their social position, with the value of aristocratic birth, and with the sinfulness of sympathizing with the lower classes. The gayest feather in Miss Monflathers cap and the brightest glory of her school was a "real live daughter of a real live baronet", although she was not only plain of features but also dull of intellect. Miss Monflathers therefore simply could not have Miss Edwards sympathizing with Nell, the waxworks child, and promptly commanded as punishment, that Miss Edwards "could not take the air" that day. Miss Edwards, in addition to having a kind heart, was also an apprentice teacher, receiving instruction free for giving instruction free, much the same as Becky Sharp in _Vanity Fair_, and was likewise held in contempt by the other teachers and pupils as well.

The folly of giving girls no practical education was evident to most of the writers of the Victorian period; an obvious illustration of the lack of such training and the inability to cope with realities is found in _David Copperfield_. When David

1. Dickens, _Old Curiosity Shop_, Bigelow, Brown & Co., New York.

becomes enamoured of Dora - who was pretty and sweet and so feminine - he tries to make her understand that he will have to make their living - that they will be poor.

> "Dora, my love, if you will sometimes think - not despondingly, you know; far from that! - but if you will sometimes think - just to encourage yourself - that you are engaged to a poor man -"
> "Don't, don't! Pray don't!" cried Dora. "It's so very dreadful!"
> "My soul, not at all!" said I cheerfully. "If you will sometimes think of that and look about now and then at your papa's housekeeping, and endeavor to acquire a little habit - of accounts, for instance -"
> Poor little Dora received this suggestion with something that was half a sob and half a scream.
> " - It would be so useful to us afterwards", I went on. "And if you would promise me to read a little - a little Cookery Book that I would send you, it would be so excellent for both of us. For our path in life, my Dora", said I, warming up to the subject, "is stony and rugged now, and it rests with us to smooth it. We must fight our way onward. We must be brave. There are obstacles to be met, and we must meet them, and crush them!"1

But this was too much for the tender Dora. She fainted dead away, and it took the combined efforts of Miss Mills and David, aided by the smelling salts, to revive her.

The lack of any practical training not only was felt in home-making, but became a real problem to those girls who were so unfortunate as to have matrimony pass them by. Mrs. Dinah Craik, writing at the middle of the century, deplored this fact; she recognizes three stages of young-ladyhood:

1. Dickens, David Copperfield, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, p.542.

> They come home from school, their education finished, and become "Papa's nosegay of beauty to adorn his drawingroom". They have plenty of money but nothing to do, except fall in love which they promptly proceed to do -- the next step. If this displeases papa or scandalizes mamma, because the object of her imaginary or real affection is considered unworthy, the young lady mopes and pines, until the mood passes. Then she sets out with only one object in view -- matrimony! Not the man but any man who will save her from such a dull life. If unsuccessful in this, she enters the third stage in which all her energies are devoted to the massacre of time. They prick him to death with crochet and embroidery needles; strum him deaf with piano and harp playing -- not music; cut him up with morning visitors, or leave his carcass in ten-minute parcels at every "friends" house they can think of. Finally, they dance him defunct at all sorts of unnatural hours; and then rejoicing in the excellent excuse, smother him in sleep for a third of the following day.[1]

While most of the boarding schools described in the fiction of this period were of the superficial type, it must not be inferred that there were no good ones. Greenleaf, the school kept by Miss Donney of Bleak House, was a commendable one. There everything was done in an orderly fashion and sound instruction was given. There were twelve boarders, of which Esther was one. She understood that she would have to depend later on her qualifications as a governess, so she was not only instructed in everything that was taught at Greenleaf, but was very soon helping to instruct others.[2]

1. Mrs. Dinah Craik, A Woman's Thoughts About Women, Rudd and Carleton, New York, 1858, p. 14.
2. Dickens, Bleak House, Bigelow, Brown and Co., Inc., New York, p. 33.

The setting of the novel Villette, by Charlotte Bronte, is taken from the school of Monsieur, and Madame Heger, near Brussels, where Charlotte and Emily passed the year 1842 as pupils and where Charlotte was the teacher of English in 1843. This was a boarding and day school for young ladies, and although she describes it more from her standpoint of a teacher there, yet a very clear idea is given of the pupils and the type of training they received. Competent teachers were employed and sound instruction was given in fundamental subjects as well as in those accomplishments deemed necessary, and comprehensive examinations were the rule. Although Madame Heger personally did not measure up to a very high standard, the school did not seem to suffer because of that; on the contrary, the girls seemed to be well taken care of physically and morally, as well as mentally.

In addition to the finishing school, there was a type of boarding school which was of a semi-charity nature. The Clergy's Daughters School at Cowan Bridge attended by the Bronte sisters was such a school. This was established in 1823 as a boarding school for the education of daughters of indigent clergymen. The fees were 14 pounds a year, with 3 pounds extra for a uniform. This small sum was not enough to cover board and education expenses, so the Rev. Wilson got together a body of annual subscribers whose contributions paid the salaries of the mistresses. The subjects taught were history, geography, use of globes, grammar, writing, arithmetic, all

kinds of needlework, and the nicer kinds of household work. If accomplishments were required, an additional charge of 3 pounds a year was made for music and drawing each.[1] In 1824 Mr. Bronte entered Maria and Elizabeth, a little later brought Charlotte (age 8), and a few months later, Emily (age 6). Thus the four eldest daughters were all at Cowan Bridge at the same time.[2] Three brief entries in the Journal of Education from the school register tell a tragic story:

> Maria Bronte, aged 10. July 1, 1824. Reads tolerably. Writes pretty well. Ciphers a little. Works badly. Very little of geography or history . . . . Left Feb. 14, 1825 in ill health, and died May 16, 1825.
>
> Elizabeth Bronte. Entered Nov. 25, 1824, aged 9. Reads a little. Writes pretty well. Ciphers none. Works very badly. Knows nothing of grammar, geography, history, or accomplishments. Left in ill health, May 31, 1825. Died June 13, 1825, in decline.
>
> Charlotte Bronte. Entered Aug. 10, 1824. Writes indifferently. Ciphers a little, and works neatly. Knows nothing of grammar, history or accomplishments. Altogether clever for her age, but knows nothing systematically. Left school June 1, 1825 . . . . Governess.[3]

Life at Cowan Bridge School was anything but pleasant or happy for the little Bronte sisters. The unhealthful location and the unpalatable and often inadequate food was too much for their delicate constitutions. In fact, Charlotte considered their treatment there to a large degree responsible

1. E. F. Benson, op. cit., p. 63.
2. Ibid., p. 21.
3. Mrs. Gaskell, Life and Works of Charlotte Bronte and her Sisters, Vol. VII, John Murray, London, 1862, pp. 64-65.

for the death of her sisters.[1] Her bitterness was so great that years later she incorporated all these experiences at Cowan Bridge into "Lowood", the school which Jane Eyre attended. According to Mrs. Gaskell, Miss Bronte said that she would not have written what she did of Lowood if she had thought the place would have been so immediately identified with Cowan Bridge, although there was not a word in her account of the institution but what was true at the time when she knew it.[2]

Routine at Lowood was very exact and discipline very strict. The girls had to arise before dawn and dress in a room bitter cold. All were clothed alike in plain brown dresses. Prayers and some classes were heard before breakfast which was served at dawn. This meal usually consisted of burned porridge which the girls could not eat. After breakfast, all eighty girls had their classes in one big room presided over by four teachers. Here there were lessons in geography, history, grammar, writing, arithmetic, and music lessons for the older girls. After a lunch of bread and cheese, all must go into the garden although it was a cold, drizzling January day, damp and raw. Some girls played on the soaking ground, but most of them stood shivering on the veranda, pulling gray cloaks about them against the bitter wind. Jane said she heard more than one girl with a hollow, foreboding cough.

1. Benson, op. cit., p. 23.
2. Mrs. Gaskell, op. cit., p. 65.

After a dinner of "indifferent potatoes and shreds of rusty meat", all adjourned to the schoolroom where lessons continued until five o'clock. Such was a typical day at Lowood.[1]

Sunday, Jane said, was even worse. The girls had to walk two miles to Brocklebridge Church, where their patron, Rev. Brocklehurst officiated. The long walk was made in clothing insufficient to protect them from the severe cold; they had no boots and the snow got into overshoes and melted there; their ungloved hands became numbed and covered with chilblains as were their feet. Jane says,

> We set out cold, we arrived at the church colder; during the morning service we became almost paralysed. It was too far to return for dinner, and an allowance of cold meat and bread, in the same penurious proportion observed in our ordinary meals, was served around between services. At the close of the afternoon service we returned by an exposed and hilly road, where the bitter wind . . . almost flayed the skin from our bones.
>
> The Sunday evening was spent in repeating, by heart, the Church Cathechism, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Matthew; and in listening to a long sermon read by Miss Miller, whose irresponsible yawns attested her weariness. Any girls falling asleep had to stand in the middle of the floor until the close of the sermon.[2]

Lessons at Lowood were all learned by heart; making them seem long and difficult to Jane. They were also dry and uninteresting. For example, in a class in English history, all the questions were about tonnage and poundage and ship-money which most of the girls were unable to answer. One girl, call-

1. Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, pp. 49-58.
2. Ibid., pp. 67-69.

ed Burns, knew all the answers, but was continually interrupted by commands to turn her toes out, draw her chin in, hold her head up, etc., etc. Her crowning disgrace was a switching on the back of her neck for not having clean fingernails. Jane wondered why she did not explain that none of the girls could wash that morning because the water was frozen solid in all the pitchers.[1]

Mrs. Gaskell affirms that Helen Burns is an exact transcript of Maria Bronte. Not a word of that part of Jane Eyre but is a literal repetition of scenes between teacher and pupil. Miss Bronte tells of the teacher, Miss Scatcherd, jerking Maria out of bed to the floor when she was really too sick to get up, without allowing her to offer a word of explanation. Before Maria's death, the "low fever", spoken of in Jane Eyre, broke out in the spring of 1825.[2]

Miss Bronte undoubtedly exaggerated the account of the low fever in calling it typhus, as several of the girls contracted it but there were no fatalities. The character of Mr. Wilson in the person of Mr. Brocklehurst was also somewhat overdrawn. Mr. Brocklehurst was represented as a parsimonious hypocrite, protesting about the extra lunch of bread and cheese, saying that that should have been an opportunity for the teacher to refer to the suffering of the primitive Christians, and to the warning in the Bible that man does not live by bread

1. Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, p. 60.
2. Mrs. Gaskell, op. cit., pp. 71, 72.

alone.[1] This was based on the fact that Mr. Wilson had said, after hearing complaints about the inedible food at Cowan Bridge, that the children were to be trained up to regard higher things than dainty pampering of the appetite.[2]

However, the picture of Cowan Bridge was so evident in "Lowood" that no doubt was felt as to what school was described. It might have been Cowan Bridge that the Rev. Barton's two daughters attended in Scenes of Clerical Life. They were sent to a school expressly founded for clergymen's daughters and as 30 pounds, the amount required, was donated by a rich parishioner for that purpose, it might have been the same school.[3]

The schools described above are representative of types found in England in the Victorian period. They were all private institutions for the middle and upper classes, ranging from the semi-charity school of Lowood to the "finishing" school such as Minerva House. Education of girls of the upper classes was necessarily carried on by private schools or governesses because the state had done very little up to 1850 toward providing any education at all, and the little that was done concerned the type of school which those classes would not attend. The public school system was of slow and gradual growth throughout the Victorian period and was not patronized much by any one who had the means to attend a private institu-

1. Mrs. Gaskell, op. cit., p. 71.
2. Benson, op. cit., p. 25.
3. George Eliot, Scenes of Clerical Life, Henry Froude, Oxford University Press, London, (First pub. 1857), p. 102.

tion. The fiction of this period all attests the truth of this fact; it abounds with illustrations similar to those given here.[1]

1. Some other schools described are:
    (a) Mrs. Wackle's School, Old Curiosity Shop, Dickens.
    (b) School in the Rue d'Isabella, The Professor, C. Bronte.
    (c) School attended by Maggie Tulliver, Mill on the Floss, George Eliot.
    (d) Mrs. Pipchin's school, Dombey and Son, Dickens.
    (e) Mrs. Lemon's school, A Holiday Romance, Dickens.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION OF GIRLS OF THE POOR.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the state was concerned no more about the education of the poor than it was about that of the upper classes. For the lower classes there were many kinds of charity and semi-charity schools, such as Sunday Schools, Day Schools, Dame Schools, Factory Schools, National Schools, Schools of the British and Foreign Society, Ragged Schools, and later, Reform Schools. The Charity Schools were really started about a hundred years earlier but so far as educating the children was concerned, they did not accomplish much. The Charity Schools were of two kinds, Day Schools and Sunday Schools. In this work the names of Hanah More of Bristol, and Mrs. Trimmer at Brentford stand out. These schools were free to children of the poor since they were supported by private contributions; they were frequently controlled by some religious body. In fact, Sunday Schools developed since that was the only day some children could attend to receive instruction. Their main object was to teach the Bible, but they were supposed to give the rudiments of a general education; so reading, writing, and a little arithmetic were usually taught.

Two men - - Alexander Bell and Joseph Lancaster -- lay

claim to starting the use of the monitorial system at the first of the century. This was a system by which the older pupils taught the younger under the supervision of the master. As many as 500 to 600 children were taught in one room by one master and monitors. The evils of such a system can easily be seen, but at that time, owing to the scarcity of teachers, it was considered quite a boon. Immediately two societies were organized to spread such schools: The British and Foreign Society, and The National Society. These schools were for both boys and girls, who paid a very small tuition.[1]

For the lowest stratum - - the waifs and strays - - the Ragged Schools were established. Through the efforts of Mary Carpenter the first one was founded in Bristol in 1846.[2] Through this work she became interested in juvenile delinquents. It shocked her to see boys and girls brought up before magistrates time after time and allowed to return to their old haunts and vicious companions without any effort made to reclaim them. Through her efforts, mainly, the first girls' Reform School was opened near Bristol in 1854.[3]

It is quite apparent that the state was not concerned about educating the children. This was due partly to religious difficulties. Both the National, and the British and Foreign Societies, because of jealousy, opposed legislation allowing

1. C. S. Bremner, op. cit., p. 26.
2. Georgiana Hill, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 65.
3. Hill, op. cit., p. 66.

the state to intervene. Until 1839, less than half the children were taught. Disraeli himself was very violent in his opposition to any participation in any educational activity on the part of the government, insisting that it should be left in the control of the parents; that any parental government would revolutionize English character until they could no longer expect English achievements; and that he would oppose to the utmost of his power any rash attempt to centralize instruction.

In spite of such powerful opposition, the beginning of state control is seen in 1832 with the meager grant of 20,000 pounds for educational purposes to be used through the schools of the two societies. Real control came in 1839 with the appointing of the Committee of Council to supervise work and inspect schools. It is interesting to read a report of one of these inspectors:

> In the girls' schools that I visited, half of the time was devoted to needle work, a portion of the proceeds of this sale was commonly used to purchase small articles of clothing for the children.[1]

Another report of a school in Liverpool in 1840 states that he found forty children in a garret 10 x 9 up three flights of stairs; on a perch in a corner were three chickens, and beneath was a dog kennel with three terriers. The master sat in a position to obscure three-fourths of the light from the

1. Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, William Clowes and Son, London, 1840. Report of Allen, 1840, p. 130.

one small window.[1] The following is a report of Day Schools visited in 1840:

> The masters appeared in most cases to be very ill educated, and the schools being matters of private speculation, except in a few instances where school-rooms were founded by the owners of the collieries, they are subjected to no inspection. . . . The deficiency of books was lamentable; in the majority of the cases some slates and copy-books, a few pages of a spelling book or an entire one with the Bible or Testament, were almost the only visible means of instruction.[2]

Here is an example of the garbled way in which the Scriptures were taught:

> My duty toads god is to bleed in him to fering and to loaf withold my sold and with my sernth to whichp and to give thinks to put my old trast in him to call upon him to onner his old name and his world and to have him truly alldays of my lifes end. (sic) [3]

Another type of school for young children was the Dame School, so-called because they were usually kept by some old woman whose only qualification for such employment was her unfitness for any other. They were often engaged at the same time in some other occupation such as shop-keeping, sewing, or washing, which made any real instruction impossible. The unwholesome conditions of one such school in 1840 was found by inspector Noel to be:

> Thirty-one children, 2 - 7 years of age, in

1. Bremner, op. cit., p. 31.
2. Minutes of Committee of Council on Education, p. 127.
3. Bremner, op. cit., p. 21.

> a damp cellar 10 feet square and 7 feet high. One very small window not made to open. Door also closed. School kept by rheumatic old woman. Kept children crowded in corner at foot of her bed. Destitute of books and without light enough to read if they had had any. A cane lay in a conspicuous place on the table.[1]

Factory schools were established in connection with factories where children worked, after the passage of the Factory Acts of 1833, 1844, and 1847, which extended the act of 1802 to an increased number of industries. According to these acts, the employer was compelled to pay the school-master for the child's tuition (which might be deducted from his wages).[2] No child under eight could be employed in a factory, and children between eight and thirteen had to attend school three hours a day if employed every day, and if working alternate days, they attended five hours. As the schools were inspected by factory inspectors, they were mockeries of education.[3]

In fact, the standard of education was so low that the report of 1845 announced, that only one child in six could read the Scriptures and many of them could not read secular books, that one-half left school without being able to read, and one in four could write.[4]

With education of the poor in such a state, it is not

1. Minutes of the Committee. Report of Noel, 1840, p. 162.
2. Edward H. Reisner, Nationalism and Education Since 1789, Macmillan and Company, New York, 1922, p. 247.
3. A Cyclopedia of Education, 5 vols. Ed. by Sam A. Burstall and M. A. Douglas, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1911, Vol. II, p. 568.
4. Bremner, op. cit., p. 3.

surprising to find this condition exposed in the fiction of the time. Dickens is especially remembered for his denunciation of the evils which existed in boys' schools of that time, particularly the Dotheboys Hall type of Nicholas Nickleby. He was also keenly aware of the general neglect on the part of the state, and the apathy and even opposition of the public towards educating the children of the poor. In the preface to Nicholas Nickleby in 1839 he says:

> Of the monstrous neglect of education in England, and the disregard of it by the state as a means of forming good or bad citizens, and miserable or happy men, this class of schools (uninspected private schools) long afforded a notable example. Although any man who had proved his unfitness for any other occupation in life, was free, without examination or qualification, to open a school anywhere; although preparation for the functions he undertook was required in the surgeon, the chemist, the attorney, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker; the whole round of crafts and trades, the schoolmaster excepted . . . . schoolmasters, as a race, were the blockheads and impostors who might naturally be expected to spring from such a state of things . . . . Traders in the avarice, indifference, or imbecility of parents, and the helplessness of children; ignorant, sordid, brutal men, to whom few considerate persons would have intrusted the board and lodging of a horse or a dog; they formed the worthy cornerstone of a structure which, for absurdity and magnificent highhanded laissez-aller neglect, had rarely been exceeded in the world.[1]

He illustrated in Nobody's Story, the inherent longing of the poor man for something better and nobler for his children, than it had been his own fortune to have. But

1. Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, preface, p. 3.

when he thought the means for such had been acquired, the Bigwig family, representing society, quarreled among themselves as to what the poor man's children should be taught; the result was that his children grew up in the ignorance and depravity of their surroundings.

> His children, stunted in their growth, bore traces of unwholesome nature; but they had beauty in his sight. Above all other things, it was an earnest desire of this man's soul that his children should be taught. "If I am sometimes mislead", said he, "for want of knowledge, at least let them know better, and avoid my mistakes. If it is hard for me to reap the harvest of pleasure and instruction that is stored in books, let it be easier for them".
>
> But the Bigwig family broke out into violent quarrels concerning what it was lawful to teach this man's family, some insisting on one thing and some on another.
>
> Meanwhile, this man, in his short evening snatches at his fireside, saw the demon Ignorance arise there, and take his children to itself. He saw his daughter perverted into a heavy slatternly drudge; he saw his son go moping down the ways of low sensuality, to brutality and crime.[1]

That the inadvisability and even wickedness of educating the poor was a sincere belief of many members of the "old school" aristocracy is shown in My Lady Ludlow, written by Mrs. Gaskell. Lady Ludlow of Hanbury Court, was unusually kind to the tenants on her estate, sending them medicine, nourishing food, and wine, when they were sick, and dealing out a benevolent justice as lady of the manor. But with all her tender-hearted sympathy for them, she firmly believed that the noble families were as a race set apart, and that it

1. Dickens, Nobody's Story from Christmas Stories. Aldine Book Pub. Co., Boston, p. 662.

was her duty to uphold this idea. Consequently, she disapproved of teaching the poor to read and write, as it would make them discontented with their lot. She contended that "education is a bad thing, if given indiscriminately. It unfits the lower orders for their duties, the duties to which they are called by God; of submission to those placed in authority over them; of contentment with that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them and of ordering themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters".[1]

Matters were brought to a head, when she, quite by accident, discovered that her steward, Mr. Horner, had taught one of the clever urchins of the village, to read and write. He had sent the boy to Lady Ludlow with a letter which he unfortunately lost on the way. Confidently, he assured her not to worry as he could repeat its contents word for word. Shocked at his ability to read, and horrified at his lack of any idea of honor, she said, "My boy, as you have got possession of edge-tools, you must have some rules how to use them. Did you never hear that you were not to open letters?"

> "It was a right word", she continued, "that I used, when I called reading and writing 'edge-tools'. If our lower orders have these edge-tools given to them, we shall have the terrible scenes of the French Revolution acted over again in England. When I was a girl, one never heard of the rights of men, one only heard of the duties. Now here was Mr. Gray, only last

1. Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, <u>My Lady Ludlow</u>, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1906, p. 149.

night, talking of the right every child had to instruction. I could hardly keep my patience with him, and at length we fairly came to words; and I told him I would have no such thing as a Sunday-school in my village."[1]

Mr. Gray was the new clergyman who felt deeply his responsibility to the people of the parish. But the point on which he and Lady Ludlow did not agree was education. One Sunday he preached a very rousing sermon on the necessity of establishing a Sunday-school in the village. The next Sunday everyone noticed that all the curtains around the Hanbury family pew had been taken down, and instead, there was glass up to the height of six or seven feet. In it was a little window that drew up and down. It was generally open; but if Mr. Gray spoke in favor of schooling or education, Lady Ludlow would step out of her corner and close the window with a decided "clang and clash".

When she learned that Mr. Gray was holding prayer-meetings in the cottages she was moved to say:

"You may depend upon it, my dear, making religion and education common - vulgarising them, as it were - is a bad thing for a nation. A man who hears prayers read in the cottage where he has just supped on bread and bacon, forgets the respect due to a church: he begins to think that one place is as good as another, and, by-and-by, that one person is as good as another; and, after that, I always find that people begin to talk of their rights, instead of thinking of their duties."[2]

1. Gaskell, _My Lady Ludlow_, p. 59.
2. _Ibid_., p. 141.

Although Mr. Gray tried hard to arouse interest in a Sunday-school, he found the parishioners unmoved since they knew that Lady Ludlow opposed it. But when she disclaimed any such influence, her best friend, Miss Galindo, said,

> "Begging your ladyship's pardon, you have. Your ancestors have lived here time out of mind, and have owned the land on which their forefathers have lived ever since there were forefathers. You yourself were born amongst them, and have been like a little queen to them ever since, I might say, and they've never known your ladyship do anything but what was kind and gentle . . . . . Only you, my lady, lead the thoughts of the parish, and save some of them a world of trouble; for they could never tell what was right if they had to think for themselves. It's all quite right that they should be guided by you, my lady - - if only you would agree with Mr. Gray."1

As Lady Ludlow was very fair-minded, she realized the truth of this argument, and said that she would reconsider the matter.

Latter, when Harry, the boy of the unfortunate letter episode, almost lost his life in his lady's service, she capitulated entirely and agreed to the establishing of a school. More apprehensive than hopeful as to the result, she allowed a schoolhouse to be built on the green, by the church. However, she expressed her wish that the boys might be taught only to read and write, and the first four rules of arithmetic; while the girls were to learn only to read, and to add up in their heads, and the rest of the time were to work at mending their clothes, knitting stockings, and

1. Gaskell, My Lady Ludlow, p. 162.

spinning. She presented the school with more spinning-wheels than there were girls, and requested that there might be a rule that they should have spun so many hanks of flax, and knitted so many pairs of stockings before they ever were taught to read at all.

In view of the hereditary opposition of Lady Ludlow, such a school was quite an accomplishment for a young clergyman who "was bitten with these new revolutionary ideas, and was so much for disturbing the established order of society."

But Mr. Dombey, of Dombey and Son, very pompously consented to the establishing of a school for the poor in order to keep "the established order of society". He believed that a certain amount of education was necessary so that "the inferior classes should continue to be taught their position".

Resistance toward any plan for educating the poor was manifested not only by members of the upper classes, but was also found among the ranks of the poor themselves. Many poor and ignorant parents strenuously objected to their children being educated. Lizzie Hexam's father was such a one. But Lizzie encouraged her brother Charley to go to evening school and learn all he could, hoping that he might become a pupil-teacher and finally a master. As for herself, she was willing to forego the privilege of learning to read, since she really loved her father and did not wish to antagonize him. She explained to Charley,

> I should be very glad to be able to read real books. I feel my want of learning very

> much, Charley. But I should feel it much more, if I didn't know it to be a tie between me and father.[1]

It was also at such an evening school that Pip in Great Expectations, received his early education. It was attended by both boys and girls, but it is Pip who tells of his experience there.

> Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt kept an evening school in the village; that is to say, she was a ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven every evening, in the society of youth, who paid two pence per week each, for the improving opportunity of seeing her do it . . . . I struggled through the alphabet as if it had been a bramble bush; getting considerably scratched by every letter. After that I fell among those thieves, the nine figures, who seemed every evening to do something new to disguise themselves and baffle recognition. But at last I began, in a purblind, groping way, to read, write, and cipher on the very smallest scale.[2]

Pip said that what he did learn was due more to help of the assistant, Biddy, great-granddaughter of the old woman who "kept" the school. The "educational scheme" was described in more detail:

> The pupils ate apples and put straws down one another's backs, until Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt collected her energies, and made an indiscriminate totter at them with a birch-rod. After receiving the charge with every mark of derision, the pupils formed in line and buzzingly passed a ragged book from hand to hand. The book had an alphabet in it, some figures and

1. Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, Bigelow, Brown & Co., New York, p. 40.
2. Dickens, Great Expectations, Bigelow, Brown & Co., New York, p. 51.

> tables, and a little spelling - - that is to say, it had had once. As soon as this volume began to circulate, Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt fell into a state of coma.[1]

While she slept, the pupils amused themselves by tormenting each other and poor Biddy, who distributed three defaced Bibles, "more illegibly printed at the best than any curiosities of literature I have since met with". This part of the course he said was usually lightened by several combats between Biddy and the pupils, after which they all read aloud with Biddy leading in a shrill, monotonous voice, and none having the least notion of what they were reading about. The din would finally awake Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, thus terminating the course for the evening, "and they all emerged into the air with shrieks of intellectual victory".

Dickens was attacking the bad private schools, conducted without any state supervision or adequate textbooks. Sunday schools, as they were usually conducted, were likewise ridiculed and exposed. He describes in detail the Sunday School which Charley Hexam attended, the school at which he had first learned from a book. It was held in a miserable loft where the atmosphere was oppressive and disagreeable; it was crowded, noisy and confusing; half of the pupils dropped asleep, while the other half kept them in that state by their monotonous, droning noise. As the teachers were animated solely by good intentions, a "lamentable jumble

1. Dickens, Great Expectations, p. 88.

was the upshot of their kind endeavours".

> It was a school for all ages and for both sexes. The latter were kept apart, and the former were partitioned off into square assortments. But all the place was pervaded by a grimly ludicrous pretence that every pupil was childish and innocent. This pretence, much favoured by the lady visitors, led to the ghastliest absurdities. Young women, old in the vices of the commonest and worst life, were expected to profess themselves enthralled by the good child's book, the Adventures of Little Margery . . . . The adult pupils were taught to read (if they could learn) out of the New Testament; and by dint of stumbling over the syllables and keeping their bewildered eyes on the particular syllables coming round to their turn, were as absolutely ignorant of the sublime history as if they had never heard of it. An exceedingly and confoundingly perplexing jumble of a school, in fact where black spirits and gray, red spirits and white, jumbled, jumbled, jumbled. . . .[1]

Mrs. Elizabeth Tonna must have had the same opinion of Sunday Schools as Dickens had. In Helen Fleetwood she describes the one to which Mrs. Green took her children after moving in from the country to work in the mills:

> Such an uninterested, heavy-looking set of scholars she had never seen; nor was their personal appearance as to cleanliness such as to invite a near approach. The greater number were dozing over their tasks, and the principle business of the teachers seemed to be that of shaking and cuffing them out of their lethargy, into which they presently relapsed.[2]

These were the children who spent long weary hours in the factory all week and were too tired to stay awake at the Sunday school, much less learn anything.

1. Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, p. 289.
2. Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Helen Fleetwood, M. W. Dodd, New York, 1894, vol. I, p. 528.

But in spite of all the disadvantages of such schools, they did perform a real service for some children who would probably have had no other schooling. Charlotte Bronte evidently had faith in them for she and her two sisters were steady teachers at the Sunday school; in fact, Charlotte kept up this teaching even after she was alone.[1] Later, her husband, Mr. Nicholls, was also a teacher; he gave religious instruction every morning from nine until half-past ten in a school of the National Society.[2]

Perhaps the type of school most universally attended by the children of the poor, was the factory school. This usually meant only that each child in a factory must produce every Monday morning, a voucher from some master or mistress of having attended their school for two hours each day on any six days out of the week. The evils of such a system have already been discussed; they are disclosed in a forceful and dramatic manner in Helen Fleetwood; Mrs. Green was new to the city and to factory life, and she discovered some very revealing facts. She was interested in the so-called factory school, and when she asked Tom South, one of the mill hands, if he sent his children to school regularly, he said:

> "What school? This act mocks us with an order that every child should go to school twelve hours in the week, and have a ticket

1. Gaskell, Life of Charlotte Bronte, p. 122.
2. Ibid., p. 635.

> for it; but when it comes to the pass, how do they manage? Why they give them an hour's leave or so at such times as no school is open, or else when there's only schools within reach where the masters or mistresses won't receive the little dirty wretches, covered with the filth of the mills, among their children. Then, to make out the twelve hours, they tell them to go to school on Sunday morning, afternoon, or night; as if the poor creatures did not want a day's rest, to say nothing of play: of course they won't go".
>
> "But how do they get vouchers?"
>
> "They forge them fast enough, but in a great many mills they are allowed to slip in without any".
>
> "But surely the inspectors must discover such deceptions as to the schools and punish them?"
>
> "The inspector comes once a year, and is bound to advertise his coming in the newspapers; so they take care to have all right just then."[1]

Mrs. Green investigated further; she talked to little Katy Malony and found that she had been going to school every day for two hours for a year and a half, but could not read.

> During school hours, she went to a place, where as many children as could stand in it, were crowded in a small room; the mistress was an old woman who kept some of the best-dressed ones near her, and they seemed to be reading and spelling. But poor Katy had never been called up to the table except to get her certificate.
>
> Mrs. Green visited the school and found a low, filthy house on a narrow alley. Entering, she was almost suffocated by the bad air. The mistress was engaged in pinning a ribbon on a bonnet. But no sooner had the visitor entered, than a few fragments of books were

1. Tonna, op. cit., p. 530.

> passed, and a low hum began as if the children were reading, although it was easy to see that no two books were open at the same place, and some were even held up-side down.[1]

Most of the novelists were writing with the purpose of exposing evils as they believed them to exist at that time, so it is quite natural that all the defects in the educational system appear.[2] There is no doubt that there was great room for improvement, and the public was being made conscious of it.

1. Tonna, *op. cit.*, p. 573.
2. Other novels dealing with this subject:
   (1) Disraeli, *Sybil*.
   (2) Mrs. Frances Trollope, *Michael Armstrong*.

CHAPTER IV

MEASURES OF REFORM AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

The influence of public opinion began to be felt, and about the middle of the century we see signs of reform. The first step toward reform was the founding in 1846 of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution. One purpose of this was to examine and grant certificates to governesses. But most of them were found to be so inefficient that it was necessary to open classes of instruction. This led to the founding of Queen's College 1848. Among the students there were Mary Frances Buss and Dorothea Beale, two of the leaders in the reform, and George Eliot. Bedford College was founded in 1849, and in 1850 Miss Buss opened her North London Collegiate School for girls. In 1858 Miss Beale's College at Cheltenham was established.

However, the report of the Schools Inquiry Commission of 1867 was what led to improvement in the greatest number of girls schools. They found that only a very small part of endowments were going to girls' schools; boys' schools were getting almost all of it. They also found that girls' schools lagged far behind boys' schools; that school-mistresses spoke slightingly of mental cultivation before their pupils; setting before them as the great aim in life to be attractive

and to make conquests. They found the general deficiency in girls' education to be:

> Want of thoroughness and foundation; want of system; slovenliness and showy superficiality; inattention to rudiments; undue time given to accomplishments, and those not taught intelligently . . . . the teachers of the girls had not themselves been well-taught and they did not know how to teach.[1]

They found only a few girls' schools doing creditable work, namely, the four colleges mentioned previously. Queen's College and Bedford College had both been founded for higher education but Bedford had had a girls' secondary school in connection with it, and Queen's retained the position of a secondary school.

Other causes which led to the raising of the standard of secondary education were the establishing of local examinations, the improved education of teachers, and the Elementary Education Act of 1870 which wiped out inferior elementary schools, and provided for locally controlled district schools, and government inspection of all schools. However, these district schools were not compulsory nor free unless patrons were unable to pay. By the act of 1880, children under ten could not be employed and _must_ attend school.[2]

The new impulse, which wrought a change in both mental and physical training, took some time to germinate. By degrees the curriculum was altered until all subjects were open.

1. Burstall & Douglas, _Public Schools for Girls,_ Longmans, Green & Company, London, 1911, p. 8.
2. Bremner, _op. cit._, pp. 40, 41.

The backboard was given up for the gymnasium, the daily walk exchanged for perhaps a game of tennis. The characteristic of the new education was its greater thoroughness; valuable things were taken up and trifling things were laid aside. Better methods were substituted for the old parrot-like system.[1]

Many schools with a high standard were established by the Girls Public Day School Co. founded 1872, for girls of the middle class. But none of the secondary schools were free, the very cheapest could be attended only by persons in comfortable circumstances. It was not until 1891 that elementary schools were free, and by the close of the century secondary schools were not yet free. No adequate provision was made for the education of the lower classes beyond the elementary school. "The low standard of culture, or to speak plainly, the absence of culture which marks the English lower classes, is thus explained. As a rule, little is expected of girls of this life, and less than little is obtained.[2]

At the same time that improvement in elementary and secondary education was brought about, there was also a struggle for higher education for women. Mention has already been made of the work of Miss Buss and Miss Beale. The establishing of colleges for women and the opening of university degrees to them was effected largely because of the demand for trained teachers.

1. Hill, op. cit., p. 132.
2. Bremner, op. cit., p. 94.

During the early part of the nineteenth century there was hardly any means for training teachers. In many cases, mere failures at other trades and crafts took to teaching as a last resource.[1]

> None was too old, too poor, too ignorant, too feeble, too sickly, too unqualified in any way to regard himself and to be regarded by others as being unfit for school-keeping. Among teachers were domestic servants out of place, discharged barmaids, venders of toys and lollipops, keepers of small eating-houses or small lodging-houses, needlewomen who took in plain sewing, milliners, consumptive patients in an advanced stage, cripples almost bedridden, outdoor paupers, men and women 70 and 80 years of age and persons who spelled badly, who could scarcely write, and who could not cipher at all.[2]

The low salary paid (men usually received twice as much as women)[3] and the low social standing of teachers both hindered the development of teaching as a profession. Lucy Snowe, it will be remembered, thought that if Count de Bassompierre and his daughter knew that she was a teacher "they might choose to vary by some shades their hitherto cordial manner toward me, when aware of my grade in society."[4]

In pleading for a higher social standing and more pay for teachers Mrs. Ellis says:

> A woman of cultivated understanding and correct religious principle, when engaged in the responsible task of educating the rising

1. Bremner, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
2. Reisner, *op. cit.*, p. 257.
3. Bremner, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
4. C. Bronte, *Villette*, Harper and Bros., New York, p. 287.

> generation, in reality fills one of the most responsible stations to which a human being can aspire; and nothing can more clearly indicate a low state of public morals than the vulgar disrespect and parsimonious remuneration with which the agents employed in education are sometimes requited.[1]

Greater respect for teachers came with better training. By 1897 Women's Colleges were turning out hundreds of graduates, and the problem of a sufficient number of adequately trained teachers seemed on the way to being solved.[2]

The subject of the admission of women to equal training with men is bound up with the age-old idea of the status of women discussed previously. Charlotte Bronte felt very deeply the injustice of such a standard, and expressed herself on that subject on more than one occasion. In a letter to a friend she wrote:

> Your daughters, as much as your sons, should aim at making their way honourably through life. Do not wish to keep them at home. Believe me, teachers may be hardworked, ill-paid, and despised, but the girl who stays at home doing nothing is worse off than the hardest-wrought and worst-paid drudge of a school.[3]

Consequently, she determined that she and her sisters should teach, have a career, "get on" not due so much to necessity as to her general principle that girls as well as boys should stand on their own feet and make their way in the world. The early Victorian view (and indeed the mid-Victorian view) was that marriage was the only career for them; but

1. Ellis, op. cit., p. 62.
2. Bremner, op. cit., p. 94.
3. Benson, op. cit., p. 85.

Charlotte was far in advance of her age.[1]

She shows Shirley, in her novel of the same name, struggling against the same idea. Shirley is trying to discuss the duties of mill-owners to employees, with Joe Scott, who says,

> "I cannot argue where I cannot be comprehended".
> "Joe, do you seriously think all the wisdom in the world is lodged in male skulls?"
> "I think that women are a kittle and a forward generation; and I've a great respect for the doctrines delivered in the second chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy."
> "What doctrines, Joe?"
> "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. . . ."
> "You allow the right of private judgement, I suppose Joe?"
> "My certy, that I do! I allow and claim it for every line of the holy book!"
> "Women may exercise it as well as men?"
> "Nay; women is to take their husband's opinion, both in politics and religion: it's wholesomest for them."[2]

And again, in Villette, Lucy Snowe, teacher in the girls' school, is admired by M. Emmanuel, a fellow-teacher, whose admiration is tempered by his skepticism of her schooling. Lucy says,

> In M. Emmanuel's soul rankled a chronic suspicion that I knew both Greek and Latin. As monkies (sic) are said to have the power of speech if they would but use it, and are reported to conceal this faculty in fear of its being turned to their detriment, so to me was ascribed a fund of knowledge which I

1. Benson, op. cit., p. 85.
2. C. Bronte, Shirley, Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1887, p. 294.

> was supposed criminally and craftily to conceal. The privileges of a "classical education", it was estimated, had been mine . . . . Women of intellect, according to M. Emmanuel, were a sort of "hisus naturae", a luckless accident, a thing for which there was neither place nor use in creation, wanted neither as wife nor worker. . . . He believed in his soul that lovely, placid, and passive feminine mediocrity was the only pillow on which manly thought and sense could find rest for its aching temples; and as to work, male mind alone could work to any good practical result.[1]

George Eliot strikes the same note in the character of Maggie Tulliver who was eager to learn, but had a dislike for all those arts deemed so necessary for little girls to learn. She declared that the patchwork, which her mother insisted on her doing, was foolish work - "tearing things to pieces to sew 'em together again."[2] When she visited Tom at school and found him almost in despair over learning his lessons, she volunteered to help him, confident in her own ability.

> "You help me, you silly little thing!" said Tom, in such high spirits at this announcement that he quite enjoyed the idea of confounding Maggie by showing her a page of Euclid. "I should like to see you doing some of my lessons! Why, I learn Latin too! Girls never learn such things. They're too silly"!

But Maggie asserted that she could learn anything that Tom could, so she appealed to Tom's teacher:

> "Mr. Stelling", she said . . . . "couldn't I do Euclid, and all Tom's lessons, if you were to teach me instead of him?"
> "No, you couldn't", said Tom indignantly. "Girls can't do Euclid; can they sir?"

1. C. Bronte, Villette, pp. 358, 359.
2. George Eliot, Mill on the Floss, Macmillan & Co., New York, p. 8.

> "They can pick up a little of everything, I dare say", said Mr. Stelling. "They've a great deal of superficial cleverness; but they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow".
>
> Maggie had never been so mortified. All her life she had been proud to be called "quick". Now it seemed this quickness was a brand of inferiority.[1]

George Eliot was herself a noble example of scholarly achievement. She believed in the solid education of women, but did not hold mere learning to be an adornment to woman; that culture, she said, must be "transmuted into a sympathy and an enlarged comprehension of the daily duties of life". When educated women "mistake vagueness for depth, bombast for eloquence, and affectation for originality", she was not surprised that men come to the conclusion that "the average nature of women is too shallow and feeble a soil to bear much tillage".[2]

In her article in Lady Novelists, George Eliot says that a really cultured woman, like a really cultured man, is all the simpler and less obtrusive for her knowledge. It makes her see herself and her opinions in just proportions, and does not cause her to flatter herself that she commands a complete view of men and things. She does not give you "information, which is the raw material of culture, she gives you sympathy, which is its subtlest essence".[3]

1. George Eliot, Mill on the Floss, pp. 149-155.
2. George W. Cooke, George Eliot, A Critical Study, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, 1895, p. 129.
3. Ibid., p. 130.

Another woman novelist of that time, Mrs. Dinah Craik, writing in 1858 said:

> Would that instead of educating our girls with the notion that they are to be wives or nothing - matrons, with an acknowledged position and duties, or with no position and duties at all - we could instil into them the principle that, above and before all, they are to be women - women, whose character is of their own making, and whose lot lies in their own hands.[1]

In an extract from the report of the Schools Inquiry Commission of 1867, Joshua Fitch in speaking of the prejudice against girls' education says:

> They will not recognize the plain facts of life that women, who have more leisure than men, have it in their power to make unconsciously, the noblest use of any culture they possess; and that every sensible man who now marries with a reasonable prospect of happiness would have a still better prospect of it if his wife could share his highest intellectual attainments. It is wonderful to see how common is the assumption that the repose and enjoyment of home are in some way incompatible with intellectual education of women.[2]

Following the report of the Commission in 1867, Miss Emily Davies presented a memorial drawing attention to the need of education for adult females. This was signed by Mary Frances Buss, Dorothea Beale, Mary Carpenter and 521 other teachers of girls; also by 175 men and women not directly concerned in teaching girls, among them being Huxley, Ruskin, Tennyson, Browning and George Eliot.[3] As a result, 3,000

1. Mrs. Dinah Craik, op. cit., p. 304.
2. Schools Inquiry Commission Report, 1867, p. 7.
3. Bremner, op. cit., p. 194.

pounds was collected to found a college for women, and in 1869 Girton College was begun with six students.[1] In 1871 Miss Clough started Newnham College at Cambridge, where women might have the advantages of certain lectures given specially to women by Cambridge University men. Local examinations were given by delegates from the university, giving the degree of Associate of Arts to successful candidates. Later, in 1873 Oxford and Cambridge Examination Boards opened examinations to girls; a junior certificate, the equivalent to an entrance examination, was given.[2] In 1878 the University of London threw open its degrees, honors and prizes to students of both sexes on equal terms,[3] and in 1881 formal permission was given women to sit for the University Honour's Examinations at Oxford and Cambridge.[4]

Thus the prospect of a women's university which animated Tennyson's Princess in 1847 had come near to realization. It still remained for women to be admitted into various professions so far considered the field for men. On this subject John Stuart Mill says:

> The claim of women to be educated as solidly, and in the same branches of knowledge, as men, is urged with growing intensity, and with a great prospect of success; while the demand for their admission into professions and occupations hitherto closed against them, becomes every year more

1. Bremner, op. cit., p. 131.
2. Ibid., p. 86.
3. Ibid., p. 140.
4. Ibid., p. 133.

urgent.[1]

Toward the close of the century we see this comparatively modern idea presented in fiction. In Odd Women we see the beginning of the inroads that women later made in fields previously open only to men. Miss Barfoot and Miss Nunn opened a place where girls were instructed in shorthand and typewriting. Their aim was to draw from the over-stocked profession of teaching as many capable young women as they could get, and fit them for certain pursuits being thrown open to women. They held the conviction that whatever man could do, woman could do equally well - those tasks only excepted which demand great physical strength. With their encouragement and financial assistance,two girls were preparing themselves to be pharmaceutical chemists; two others had been aided to open a bookseller's shop; and several who had clerkships in view received an admirable training at their school in Portland Street.[2]

When discussing a friend of theirs who was teaching school until such time as her fiance was able to provide a home for her, Rhoda Nunn said that was the kind of teacher that should be abolished. When asked how that was to be accomplished, Rhoda replied:

1. John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women, D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1870, p. 24.
2. George Gissing, Odd Women, Sidgwick and Jackson, p. 71.

> Girls are to be brought up to a calling in life, just as men are. It's because they have no calling that, when need comes, they all offer themselves as teachers. They undertake one of the most difficult and arduous pursuits as if it were as simple as washing up dishes. We can't earn money in any other way, but we can teach children.[1]

When the next argument was brought forward that women only taught until they were married and that any training would be profitless, Rhoda asserted,

> No. Not henceforth profitless! There's the very point I insist upon. So far is it from profitless, that it has made her a wholly different woman from what she would otherwise have been. Instead of a moping, mawkish creature, with - in most instances - a very unhealthy mind, she is a complete human being. She stands in an equality with the man.[2]

Rhoda had visions of what the future would bring. She says,

> And when the whole course of female education is altered; when girls are trained as a matter of course to some definite pursuit; then those who really are obliged to remain at home will do their duty there in quite a different spirit. Home-work will be their serious business, instead of a disagreeable drudgery, or a way of getting through the time till marriage offers. I would have no girl, however wealthy her parents, grow up without a profession. There should be no such thing as a class of females vulgarized by the necessity of finding daily amusement.[3]

George Meredith also realized the new evaluation of woman in his heroine, Diana. She too was an intelligent girl revolt-

1. George Gissing, Odd Women, pp. 129, 130.
2. Ibid., p. 130.
3. Ibid., p. 131.

ing against the way in which men looked upon women as being their inferiors intellectually. "I suppose we women are taken to be second thoughts of the Creator; human nature's fringes, mere finishing touches, not a part of the texture", said Diana. But she too saw the dawn of a new day when she said,

> However, I fancy I perceived some tolerance growing in the minds of the dominant sex. Our old lawyer, Mr. Braddock, assures me he expects the day to come when women will be encouraged to work at crafts and professions for their independence. That is the secret of the opinion of us at present - our dependency. Give us the means of independence, and we will gain it, and have a turn at judging you, my lords![1]

Tolerance was indeed growing along with the increased independence of women. The foundations were laid for the emergence, in the twentieth century, of emancipated womankind.

1. George Meredith, Diana of the Crossways, Charles Scribners Sons, 1899, p. 133.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION.

Thus we have seen mirrored in the fiction of the Victorian period the record of the gradual educational emancipation of the girls and women of that time. Here we have traced the elevation of the girls of the lower classes from the Ragged Schools to free, compulsory schools supported by the state; we have traced the gradual change from the superficial finishing schools with the accent on so-called accomplishments, to the state-supervised secondary schools with their broadened curriculum; and we have traced the development of teacher training from the utterly incompetent old women who were "keepers" of the Dame Schools, as well as the young, inexperienced governess often "teaching something she did not know herself", to the trained college graduates, as well equipped as their masculine colleagues.

But most significant of all we have seen the gradual change in the conception of the status of woman, and in the idea of what her education should consist. We have seen the transformation of the ideal of womanhood as represented by the delicate, sheltered Dora Copperfield, to the self-reliant, forward-looking Diana, and the modern business woman represented by Rhoda Nunn.

To what extent these changes were brought about by the writers of the time we will not attempt to say; but the printed page does influence public opinion to a marked degree, and such writers as Dickens, Thackeray, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Gissing and Meredith may have had their share in bringing to fruition those dreams which quickened their thoughts.

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