

**THE EDUCATION OF
OUR GIRLS. [NEW
YORK-1907]**

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THOMAS EDWARD SHIELDS

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the Catholic University of America.
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making of a Dullard."



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TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
DENNIS JOSEPH O'CONNELI
RECTOR OF THE
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
IN SINCERE APPRECIATION
OF HIS EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF
OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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PREFACE

THE problems which are discussed in these pages are among the most important with which the educationist, in theory and in practice, is called to deal. While it is universally acknowledged that the education of women should be as perfect as possible and should therefore be shaped in accordance with actual needs and based on the most improved methods, it is not so clear just how this education is to be imparted in such a way as to bring out in their full value and beauty the special endowments of woman.

Where such vital interests are at stake, variety of opinion is to be expected, and the most helpful means of reaching a final solution is found in the presentation and comparison of different views. Dr. Shields has done this in a pleasing and effectual manner by bringing forward in his book typical representatives of opposite schools of thought concerning coeducation. At the same time he

has furnished an object lesson in criticism and discussion which can not but prove helpful to the individual teacher in her study and to those gatherings of teachers at which educational problems are viewed in the light of a larger experience and reviewed from many standpoints.

The conclusion reached in this volume is plainly in favor of the higher education of women; but it is also higher education *for women*. In keeping with the principle that all education must consider not only the knowledge to be provided but also and primarily the needs and capacity of the developing mind, it is here claimed that woman can be most fully and most naturally educated only in a school or college for women. The alleged advantages of coeducation are more than outweighed by its disadvantages. As is well known, serious objection has been urged by recent authorities against the practice of teaching both sexes the same subjects by the same methods in the same institution. This argument is presented here in a manner at

once forceful and intelligible; and it is strengthened by considerations which the Catholic parent and teacher will be the first to appreciate.

This verdict, on the other hand, points clearly to certain practical aspects of our Catholic educational system. If it is desirable that our girls should be educated in schools specially adapted to their needs and to their social functions in life, it is equally desirable and necessary that these schools should be properly equipped for what they undertake. In other words, the most telling argument against coeducation must be found in the work done by schools exclusively for women. The superiority of such work is to be secured not so much by enriching the course of study and adding attractions of minor importance as by preparing the teachers for their task. It is no doubt a praiseworthy thing in any teacher that she should select as an occupation the training of other minds, even though the necessity of earning a livelihood and the prospect of a more advantageous situation later on should

be of prime importance to her. But quite beyond these motives is that which inspires the woman who takes up teaching as a religious duty to which her whole life is consecrated. No better lesson in unselfish devotion to the cause of truth can be given than that which we find in our Catholic teaching communities. This accounts, I am convinced, for the eagerness with which the sisterhoods welcome each suggestion that holds out the promise of helping them to better work. And it explains, in large measure, the desire of Catholic parents to have their daughters trained by religious teachers wherever such training is available.

The simplest justice, no less than educational wisdom, requires that the good-will and enthusiasm of our teachers should be recognized by those who are charged with the work of Catholic higher education; and it is therefore gratifying to note that this recognition, in a very helpful form, comes from a professor in the Catholic University, and from one who is thoroughly acquainted with the needs and possibilities of our schools. As this volume is