

THE EDUCATION OF CATHOLIC GIRLS

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The education of Catholic girls by Janet Erskine Stuart

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BY
JANET ERSKINE STUART

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PREFACE

WE have had many treatises on education in recent years; many regulations have been issued by Government Departments; enormous sums of money are contributed annually from private and public sources for the improvement and development of education. Are the results in any degree proportioned to all these repeated and accumulated efforts? It would not be easy to find one, with practical experience of education, ready to give an unhesitatingly affirmative answer. And the explanation of the disappointing result obtained is very largely to be found in the neglect of the training of the will and character, which is the foundation of all true education. The programmes of Government, the grants made if certain conditions are fulfilled, the recognition accorded to a school if it conforms to a certain type, these things may have raised the standard of teaching, and forced attention to subjects

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of learning which were neglected ; they have done little to promote education in the real sense of the term. Nay, more than this, the insistence on certain types of instruction which they have compelled has in too many cases paralysed the efforts of teachers who in their hearts were striving after a better way.

The effect on some of our Catholic schools of the newer methods has not been free from harm. Compelled by force of circumstances, parental or financial, to throw themselves into the current of modern educational effort, they have at the same time been obliged to abandon the quieter traditional ways which, while making less display, left a deeper impress on the character of their pupils. Others have had the courage to cling closely to hallowed methods built up on the wisdom and experience of the past, and have united with them all that was not contradictory in recent educational requirements. They may, thereby, have seemed to some wanting in sympathy with the present, and attaching too great value to the past. The test of time will probably show that they have given to both past and present an equal share in their consideration.

It will certainly be of singular advantage to those who are engaged in the education of

Catholic girls to have before them a treatise written by one who has had a long and intimate experience of the work of which she writes. Loyal in every word to the soundest traditions of Catholic education, the writer recognizes to the full that the world into which Catholic girls pass nowadays on leaving school is not the world of a hundred, or of fifty, or of even thirty years ago. But this recognition brings out, more clearly than anything else could do, the great and unchanging fact that the formation of heart and will and character is, and must be always, the very root of the education of a child; and it also shows forth the new fact that at no time has that formation been more needed than at the present day.

The pages of this book are well worthy of careful pondering and consideration, and they will be of special value both to parents and to teachers, for it is in their hands and in their united, and not opposing action, that the educational fate of the children lies.

But I trust that the thoughts set forth upon these pages will not escape either the eyes or the thoughts of those who are the public custodians and arbiters of education in this country. The State is daily becoming more jealous in its control of educational effort in