

CHATS WITH GIRLS ON SELF-CULTURE

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Chats with girls on self-culture by Eliza Chester

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ELIZA CHESTER

**CHATS WITH GIRLS
ON SELF-CULTURE**

BOOKS BY ELIZA CHESTER.
(HARRIET E. PAINE.)

CHATS WITH GIRLS ON SELF-CULTURE
AND
THE UNMARRIED WOMAN.

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CHATS WITH GIRLS
ON
SELF-CULTURE

BY

ELIZA CHESTER

AUTHOR OF "GIRLS AND WOMEN"

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CHATS WITH GIRLS ON SELF-CULTURE.



I.

WHAT IS SELF-CULTURE?

ONE summer morning, long ago, I sat in a pleasant schoolroom and listened while a group of fine young girls in fresh, white dresses read their graduating compositions. One of them, whose eyes were clear and whose voice was earnest, had chosen as her subject the words of Jean Paul, — “I have made of myself all that could be made of the stuff.” I have forgotten her composition; but I think it must have been forcible, since after all these years I remember her dignity of bearing, and the impression of her motto has never been lost. It seems to me a worthy introduction to the subject of Self-Culture.

Self-Culture is the education which we give ourselves, or in other words, the culture of ourselves by ourselves. We have all kinds of material to work upon, and some of us have great help from others in our work, but we all have to do something. Even a princess, surrounded by

teachers from the moment she is born, cannot be cultivated without doing a part of the work.

The help of others ought to be a blessing to us, and it is so in the case of real help; but so much that is called help is not real, that those who are forced to rely on themselves often make the most complete men and women. Nevertheless the pronoun I is apt to have an unlovely character. Whoever is always saying, "I did it," "I made this of myself," etc., is not very attractive. Those who have no culture but self-culture are so in danger of being one-sided in their development, that it is necessary to sound a note of warning to them at the very beginning of this little book. It is certainly our duty to make all we can of the stuff. We can often do this modestly by following the advice of our parents and teachers; but when we are called upon to take counsel of ourselves alone, we have to concentrate our attention so much on ourselves that the result may be disastrous.

"Evelina's conversation is rather exhausting," said a lively young teacher. "On the train she explains the action of the engine, beginning with the fire under the boiler, and never stopping till the steam has passed off into space. Coming home from a concert she lets no one rest till she has pointed out all the visible constellations. At Plymouth the other day she insisted on relating the entire history of the Pilgrim Fathers, — that is, so far as she knows it; and she always uses French