THE COLLEGIATE TRAINING OF WOMEN.

By T. Claye Shaw, M.D., F.R.C.P., Lecturer on Psychological Medicine, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

To the girls who are educated at the large collegiate establishments which are to be found in almost every large town, there is nothing comparable. The glamour of the whole life there, the magnificence of the buildings, the feeling that they are emulating the processes which are employed in the training of men, the intoxication of success in the examinations or of prominence in the athletic field,—all these combine to the rise of a new self, which is so special in its kind, so different from home or elementary school life, that many excuses must be made for the partisans of the system. There are, however, people who, knowing the inner life of this form of education, have legitimate doubts as to whether these forcing-houses of intellectual display do not in many cases overshoot the mark, and tend to create a class of women unsuited for the best social future which the parents have a right to expect,—best for the women themselves, and for the generation of which they form so important a part. Those best able to judge are the medical men who are attached to these institutions, and their experience is to the effect that stress of competition presses in too indiscriminate a way upon the young women who are brought together and educated in very large numbers.

Consulting-room histories of headaches, mental affections, break-downs, and irregularities, supplemented by accounts of the administration of bromides and other remedies, are common enough, and leave no doubt that, though a few may come out of the curriculum apparently none the worse physically, yet numbers suffer in that they either break down completely, or, being of little use in maintaining the literary reputation of the school, are left to join the common herd of make-weights, learning nothing that is of use to them, but possessed with the idea that they are being glorified by their surroundings. The indiscriminate massing of girls in large classes, of subjecting them to examinations regardless of their physical conditions at the time, of making them participate in severe muscular exercises,—in a word, of keeping them in a continued state of high pressure, is the fault of the system of training women to compete with men on platforms, which, though suitable to the one, are not so for the other. It is not to be denied that the experience of examiners at the universities and colleges is to the effect that the answers sent in by women are often as good, or even better, than those of the male candidates; but at what cost this is achieved is too often apparent afterwards in the results to the girls themselves,
and in the course of their subsequent family and social relationships.

The forcing system is good neither for the quick-witted nor for the moderate or dull girls; perhaps, indeed, the former suffer the most, for their readiness at work and the pressure that is put on them to accomplish an end at all risk, though at times compassed with impunity, often ends in disaster and evil after-consequences. The woman who is placed on the same competitive platform as the man, is on her mettle to show that she is just as good as he is, and her endeavours to attain this equality or superiority are such as to tax her efforts in a large number of instances beyond her strength. And what are the material profits to them of these distressing efforts to rival or compete with men on the same platforms? In medicine they have had only a very moderate success at the best, often they have been conspicuous failures. They may obtain the coveted B.A. degree, and be appointed as mistresses or heads of colleges, but these prizes are not numerous, and the majority are left simply to glory in the fact that they are stamped with a mark which is not of much use to them. Does it make them better mothers, or better members of society in the way of companionship, of intellectual advancement, of aid in charitable work, or even of service in their own families? If the higher education is effectual, it ought to improve the status of women, to bring them into prominence, and cause them to be especially sought after in all the phases of social life; but that it really does so operate can be only partially affirmed. If the statistics of marriage of female graduates could be obtained, they would almost certainly point to the conclusion that scholastic excellence is not a very valuable asset in the matrimonial market, not so much because men are afraid of women with diplomas, as because the very course of study and the trend of mind which it creates seem to displace in the woman the marriageable attributes, to give them a feeling of independence and the desire of relying upon their own efforts, and to check that impulsiveness which, correct as it generally is in its demonstrations, has always been regarded as one of the most characteristic features of the female organisation. To the women who are successful in their university curriculum, the condition to which they have arrived is probably congenial; they find themselves on an intellectual plane which opens up paths of pursuits to which before they were strangers, and if, perhaps, the training has unfitted them for literary work in the higher flights of imagination, it has at any rate enabled them to take a place among the quiet workers in science and art who contribute to the synthetic result of some final development. This is of course an excellent thing in its way, and that women should have persevered against so much opposition, and have won, should have succeeded in finding occupation of a character so fitting to themselves, is an achievement of which they are
deservedly proud; but it does seem as if the altruistic and sympathetic side of the woman's character is destroyed by the process of the new education, which substitutes a cold formalism for the warm spontaneity which dominates the majority of the sex.

After allowing that there are many women who do successfully attain the goal of their intellectual promptings, and in doing this have found their correct sphere of orientation, what is to be said of those who are indiscriminately placed on the same ways but are found to be impossible of completion for launching and trial? If it merely involved their withdrawal from the process when found unfit for training, and an adaptation of their education to their capabilities, nothing of a censorious character could be alleged; but such an adjustment is not found. Whether fit or not, the students are pressed into the same grooves which their more adaptable comrades negotiate readily; they are brought up to examinations and tests with a complete disregard of the physical injury entailed by the whip and spur of competition; and when they fail, as they must do, unless a timely breakdown saves them, they retire with a feeling of shame and disappointment, and with the sense that they must plod along an irksome road that leads to nothing. To some degree, what is predicated of the large colleges may be said of the smaller schools, but in the latter the strain of competition is not so great and things are not conducted at such a high pressure.

The remedy would appear to be found in the separation of women from men in university work. There ought to be distinct and separate universities for women, in which the tests imposed could be adapted to the organisation and faculties of the sex, and subjects introduced which are not possible under the existing system. Women do not like to confess that they are unequal to the intellectual tests to which men are subjected, and indeed no one wishes to deny that some of them are able to show excellence, and even occasional superiority, in the results; but those conversant with the facts know that much suffering is caused by the too general application of methods which are only suited to the few. And, apart from this question of competitive study, we may fairly ask if the kind of life in the large colleges affiliated to the universities is not one rather exclusive in its direction, insidious in its powerful corruption of the womanhood, in showing what the woman can be trained to do. The education, which is conducted on the same lines and in the same subjects as men; the ardent pursuit of identical games (so far, however, football has not established itself); the freedom and independence which are cultured, to the detriment of the practical nature of duty and self-effacement in the social and home life—in short, the elevation of the purely intellectual, and the disregard of the emotional side of the character: all these must issue in what is the great complaint of to-day, namely, that the restlessness of girls, the desire for
change, the unwillingness to take up the very necessary, if at times irksome, duties of home life, are the result of a training which is false to the true interests of the race, when that training is employed without discrimination; for it ought never to be overlooked that, though the woman may be trained to a vraisemblance of the man’s rôle in life, she does by the very act create a void which cannot be filled, because the man can never take the place of the woman, and the balance of the function is destroyed.

Whilst allowing to the few that they justify by their success all that the modern system claims in the “elevation of the standard of intellectual development in women,” what can be said of its effect upon those who, unable to run in the race, are the disappointing laggards who linger in the track? There are no consolation prizes for them, and the training has unfitted them for the ordinary and unexciting course of social responsibility to which they are best fitted. They miss the idea of change and excitement, of the life which is selfish for its own ends, of the necessity for an outdoor existence, of the freedom from restraint to which they have been educated; and when they return to home life they find it devoid of variety, uninteresting, and so insupportable, that they seize upon every opportunity to realise the “high ideal” which has been held up to them without regard as to whether it was the right ideal for them; and so they leave home, or wander about helplessly, or give themselves up to “having a good time,” in the endeavour to seek for what has been destroyed in them, namely, the true altruism, which would lead to usefulness by the performance of duties which it is their place to carry out. It is quite right, and it is of course a physiological necessity, that some field for the energy of young women should be provided; but it is here contended that the training of the day is too abstract and theoretical, that it is directed to the elevation without discrimination of a false ideal, and that it tends to the development of a useless personality, because the tendencies are all treated in the same way, regardless of innate differences. How different is the education of men! If a young man goes to a college with a special object, he has the opportunity of developing his bent; he can be specially prepared in art, science, philosophy, or what not; or, if he has no especial line, he is simply left and returned to those who sent him, without a cachet it is true, but he has at any rate had his opportunities, and these too in a regulated, non-oppressive manner. But for the ordinary girl there have been no opportunities, unless her inclinations have lain in the common groove. Why should not those who have aptitude for the domesticities not be specially uplifted in them—in cooking, in the making of clothes, in the keeping of accounts, in type-writing and shorthand, in any special subject for which they show bias, and be relieved of the useless expense of energy which is dissipated in the daily round of a treadmill education? One of the great difficulties in the
way of individual treatment is the enormous size to which some of these establishments have grown. Where hundreds of girls are aggregated, it is quite impossible to specialise each pupil's capabilities, and though the results of this education en masse may be very satisfactory to the college chest, they are positively injurious to the greater proportion of young women, who leave without having learnt anything of much use, but with heads filled with exaggerated importance of the conditions under which they have been living. Truly should the father of a family hesitate before he commits his girls to a line of education. If they are brought up at home, the opportunity of making acquaintances and friendships is lost; if they are sent to colleges which are modelled after the manner of institutions for men, they are either over-pressed or practically neglected, in addition to which they become permeated with a tone not very conducive to subsequent peace and usefulness at home.

The numbers of women engaged in useful employment now-a-days is great, and is ever increasing, and the women are the happier and the better for it; but on looking around at those who are so occupied, one is struck by the fact that most of them are not of the kind trained in colleges; they are women who have specialised themselves in what they have felt to be their own spheres of excellence. In the curtailment of the size of colleges, in their specialisation and adaptation to individual requirements, and in the provision of separate universities for women, appear to lie the means for the best education, a training graduated to work without undue stress, and permeated throughout by the feminine spirit, which, strive as they may, no amount of imitation of men's methods will ever quite eradicate, though it may accomplish a bastard resemblance, which is full of peril to the woman, who has her own kind of superiority—a proprium of great price, if she only knows how to value it.

**CLINICAL RECORDS.**

**A CASE OF CAESAREAN SECTION FOR CONTRACTED PELVIS.**

By J. A. C. KYNOCH, M.B., F.R.C.P.Ed., Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, St. Andrews University.

Case.—I. Y., æt. 21, was delivered of her first child eighteen months ago. She had been in labour thirty hours, when repeated attempts to effect delivery by forceps, in Walcher's position, failed. Version was then resorted to, and a still-born, slightly premature, male child delivered, there being great difficulty in getting the after-coming head through the pelvis. She presented herself at the Dundee Maternity

---

1 Read before the Forfarshire Medical Association, February 5, 1904.