

doors involve wonderful changes of dress and an amount of preparation appalling to the masculine creature.

Worst of all, however, to my mind—most destructive in every way—is the American view of female education. The time taken for the more serious instruction of girls extends to the age of eighteen, and rarely over this. During these years they are undergoing such organic development as renders them remarkably sensitive. At seventeen I presume that healthy girls are nearly as well able to study, with proper precautions, as men; but before this time over-use, or even a very steady use, of the brain is dangerous to health and to every probability of future womanly usefulness.

In most of our schools the hours are too many, for both girls and boys. From a quarter of nine or nine until half-past two is, with us, the common school-time in private seminaries. The usual recess is twenty minutes or half an hour, and it is not filled by enforced exercise. In certain schools—would it were the rule!—ten minutes recess is given after every hour; and in the Blind Asylum this time is taken up by light

aches or constant weariness, and only fifteen were perfectly well." They next tell us that the best medical opinions state that men should not use the brain daily more than six hours, nor children more than three: "But in the above school thirty-one studied three and one-half hours, thirty-five studied four hours, and twelve from four to seven hours, *in addition to the six hours of school.*" The report adds that, "in places where scholars are highest in reputation, the above example is the common experience."

In a somewhat discursive fashion I have pointed out the mischief which is pressing to-day upon our girls of every class in life. The doctor knows how often and how earnestly he is called upon to remonstrate against this growing evil. He is, of course, well enough aware that many sturdy girls stand the strain, but he knows also that very many do not—and that the brain, sick with multiplied studies never thoroughly mastered, plods on, doing poor work, until somebody wonders what is the matter with that girl; and so she scrambles through, or else breaks down with weak eyes, headaches, neuralgias, or what not.

I am perfectly confident that I shall be told here that girls ought to be able to study hard between fourteen and eighteen years without injury, if boys can do it. Practically, however, the boys of to-day are getting their toughest education later and later in life, while girls leave school at the same age as they did thirty years ago. It used to be common for boys to enter college at fourteen: at present, eighteen is a usual age of admission at Harvard or Yale. Now, let any one compare the scale of studies for both sexes employed half a century ago with that of to-day. He will find that its demands are vastly more exacting than they were—a difference fraught with no evil for men, who attack the graver studies later in life, but most perilous for girls, who are still expected to leave school at eighteen or earlier.\*

I firmly believe—and I am not alone in this opinion—that as concerns the physical future of women they would do far better if the brain were

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\* Witness Richardson's heroine, who was "perfect mistress of the four rules of arithmetic!"

very lightly tasked and the school-hours but three or four a day until they reach the age of seventeen at least. Anything, indeed, were better than loss of health; and if it be in any case a question of doubt, the school should be unhesitatingly abandoned or its hours lessened, as the source of very many of the nervous maladies with which our women are troubled. I am almost ashamed to defend a position which is held by many competent physicians, but an intelligent friend, who has read this page, still asks me why it is that overwork of brain should be so serious an evil to women at the age of womanly development. My best reply would be the experience and opinions of those of us who are called upon to see how many school-girls are suffering in health from confinement, want of exercise at the time of day when they most incline to it, bad ventilation,\* and too

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\* In the city where this is written there is, so far as I know, not one private girls' school in a building planned for a school-house. As a consequence, we hear endless complaints from young ladies of overheated or chilly rooms. If the teacher be old, the room is kept too warm; or if she be young, and much afoot about her school, the apartment is apt to be cold.

steady occupation of mind. At no other time of life is the nervous system so sensitive—so irritable, I might say—and at no other are abundant fresh air and exercise so all-important. To show more precisely how the growing girl is injured by the causes just mentioned would carry me upon subjects unfit for full discussion in these pages, but no thoughtful reader can be much at a loss as to my meaning.

These, then, are a few of the reasons why it were better not to educate girls at all between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, unless it can be done with careful reference to their bodily health. To-day, the American woman is, to speak plainly, physically unfit for her duties as woman, and is perhaps of all civilized females the least qualified to undertake those weightier tasks which tax so heavily the nervous system of man. She is not fairly up to what nature asks from her as wife and mother. How will she sustain herself under the pressure of those yet more exacting duties which nowadays she is eager to share with the man?

While making these stringent criticisms, I am