PART V.

THE EUROPEAN WAY.

"And let it appear that he doth not change his country manners for those of foreign parts, but only prick in some flowers of that he hath learned abroad into the customs of his own country." — LORD BACON.

ONE branch of the stream of travel that flows with steadily-increasing volume across the Atlantic, from the western to the eastern continent, passes from the United States, through Nova Scotia, to England. The traveller who follows this route is struck, almost as soon as he leaves the boundaries of the republic, with the difference between the physique of the inhabitants he encounters and that of those he has left behind him. The difference is most marked between the females of the two sections. The firmer

step, fuller chest, and ruddier cheek of the Nova-Scotian girl foretell still greater differences of color, form, and strength that England and the Continent present. These differences impressed one who passed through Nova Scotia not long ago very strongly. Her observations upon them are an excellent illustration of our subject, and they deserve to be read in this connection. Her remarks, moreover, are indirect but valuable testimony to the evils of our sort of identical education of the sexes. "Nova Scotia," she says, "is a country of gracious surprises."

"But most beautiful among her beauties, most wonderful among her wonders, are her children. During two weeks' travel in the Provinces, I have been constantly more and more impressed by their superiority in appearance, size, and health, to the children of the New-England and Middle States. In the outset of our journey, I was struck by it; along all the roadsides they looked up, boys *and girls*, fair, broad-cheeked, sturdy-legged, such as with us are seen only now and then.

I did not, however, realize at first that this was the universal law of the land, and that it pointed to something more than climate as a cause. But the first school that I saw, *en masse*, gave a startling impetus to the train of observation and influence into which I was unconsciously falling. It was a Sunday school in the little town of Wolfville, which lies between the Gaspereau and Cornwallis Rivers, just beyond the meadows of the Grand Pré, where lived Gabriel Lajeunesse, and Benedict Bellefontaine, and the rest of the 'simple Acadian farmers.' I arrived too early at one of the village churches; and, while I was waiting for a sexton, a door opened, and out poured the Sunday school, whose services had just ended. On they came, dividing in the centre, and falling to the right and left about me, thirty or forty boys and girls, between the ages of seven and fifteen. They all had fair skins, red cheeks, and clear eyes; they were all broad-shouldered, straight, and sturdy; the younger ones were more than sturdy, — they were fat, from the ankles up.

But perhaps the most noticeable thing of all was the quiet, sturdy, unharassed expression which their faces wore; a look which is the greatest charm of a child's face, but which we rarely see in children over two or three years old. Boys of eleven or twelve were there, with shoulders broader than the average of our boys at sixteen, and yet with the pure childlike look on their faces. Girls of ten or eleven were there, who looked almost like women, — that is, like ideal women, — simply because they looked so calm and undisturbed. . . . Out of them all there was but one child who looked sickly. He had evidently met with some accident, and was lame. Afterward, as the congregation assembled, I watched the fathers and *mothers* of these children. They, too, were broad-shouldered, tall, and straight, *especially the women.* Even old women were straight, like the negroes one sees at the South walking with burdens on their heads.

"Five days later I saw, in Halifax, the celebration of the anniversary of the settlement of the Province. The children of the city and

of some of the neighboring towns marched in 'Bands of Hope,' and processions such as we see in the cities of the States on the Fourth of July. This was just the opportunity I wanted. It was the same here as in the country. I counted, on that day, just eleven sickly-looking children; no more! Such brilliant cheeks, such merry eyes, such evident strength, — it was a scene to kindle the dullest soul! There were scores of little ones there, whose droll, fat legs would have drawn a crowd in Central Park; and they all had that same quiet, composed, well-balanced expression of countenance of which I spoke before, and of which it would be hard to find an instance in all Central Park.

"Climate, undoubtedly, has something to do with this. The air is moist; and the mercury rarely rises above 80°, or falls below 10°. Also the comparative quiet of their lives helps to make them so beautiful and strong. But the most significant fact to my mind is, that, until the past year, there have been in Nova Scotia no public schools, comparatively few

private ones; and in these there is no severe pressure brought to bear on the pupils. . . . I must not be understood to argue from the health of the children of Nova Scotia, as contrasted with the lack of health among our children, that it is best to have no public schools; only that it is better to have no public schools than to have such public schools as are now killing off our children. . . . In Massachusetts, the mortality from diseases of the brain and nervous system is eleven per cent. In Nova Scotia it is only eight per cent." *

It would be interesting and instructive to ascertain, if we could, the regimen of female education in Europe. The acknowledged and unmistakable differences between American and European girls and women — the delicate bloom, unnatural weakness, and premature decay of the former, contrasted with the bronzed complexion, developed form, and enduring force of the latter — are not ade-

* Bits of Talk. By H. H. Pp. 71–75.

quately explained by climate. Given sufficient time, difference of climate will produce immense differences of form, color, and force in the same species of animals and men. But a century does not afford a period long enough for the production of great changes. That length of time could not transform the sturdy German fraulein and robust English damsel into the fragile American miss. Everybody recognizes and laments the change that has been and is going on. "The race of strong, hardy, cheerful girls, that used to grow up in country places, and made the bright, neat, New-England kitchens of olden times, — the girls that could wash, iron, brew, bake, harness a horse and drive him, no less than braid straw, embroider, draw, paint, and read innumerable books, — this race of women, pride of olden time, is daily lessening; and, in their stead, come the fragile, easy-fatigued, languid girls of a modern age, drilled in book-learning, ignorant of common things." * No

* House and Home Papers. By Harriet Beecher Stowe. P. 205.

similar change has been wrought, during the past century, upon the mass of females in Europe. There —

> "Nature keeps the reverent frame
> With which her years began."

If we could ascertain the regimen of European female education, so as to compare it fairly with the American plan of the identical education of the sexes, it is not impossible that the comparison might teach us how it is, that conservation of female force makes a part of trans-Atlantic, and deterioration of the same force a part of cis-Atlantic civilization. It is probable such an inquiry would show that the disregard of the female organization, which is a palpable and pervading principle of American education, either does not exist at all in Europe, or exists only in a limited degree.

With the hope of obtaining information upon this point, the writer addressed inquiries to various individuals, who would be likely to have the desired knowledge. Only a few answers to his inquiries have been received up to the present writing; more are promised by and

by. The subject is a delicate and difficult one to investigate. The reports of committees and examining boards, of ministers of instruction, and other officials, throw little or no light upon it. The matter belongs so much to the domestic economy of the household and school, that it is not easy to learn much that is definite about it except by personal inspection and inquiry. The little information that has been received, however, is important. It indicates, if it does not demonstrate, an essential difference between the regimen or organization, using these terms in their broadest sense, of female education in America and in Europe.

Dr. H. Hagen, an eminent physician and naturalist of Königsburg, Prussia, now connected with the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Cambridge, writes from Germany, where he has been lately, in reply to these inquiries, as follows: —

NUREMBERG, July 23, 1873.

DEAR SIR, — The information, given by two prominent physicians in Berlin, in an-

swer to the questions in your letter, is mostly of a negative character. I believe them to prove that generally girls here are doing very well as to the catamenial function.

First, most of the girls in North Germany begin this function in the fifteenth year, or even later; of course some few sooner, even in the twelth year or before; but the rule is after the fifteenth year. Now, nearly all leave the school in the fifteenth year, and then follow some lectures given at home at leisure. The school-girls are of course rarely troubled by the periodical function.

There is an established kind of tradition giving the rule for the regimen during the catamenial period: this regimen goes from mother to daughter, and the advice of physicians is seldom asked for with regard to it. As a rule, the greatest care is taken to avoid any cold or exposure at this time. If the girls are still school-girls, they go to school, study and write as at other times, *provided the function is normally performed.*

School-girls never ride in Germany, nor are

they invited to parties or to dancing-parties. All this comes after the school. And even then care is taken to *stay at home when the periodical function is present.*

Concerning the health of the German girls, as compared with American girls, the German physicians have not sufficient information to warrant any statement. But the health of the German girls is commonly good except in the higher classes in the great capitals, where the same obnoxious agencies are to be found in Germany as in the whole world. But here also there is a very strong exception, or, better, a difference between America and Germany, as German girls are never accustomed to the free manners and modes of life of American girls. As a rule, in Germany, the mother directs the manner of living of the daughter entirely.

I shall have more and better information some time later.

Yours,

H. HAGEN.

A German lady, who was educated in the schools of Dantzic, Prussia, afforded information, which, as far as it went, confirmed the above. Three customs, or habits, which exert a great influence upon the health and development of girls, appear from Dr. Hagen's letter to make a part of the German female educational regimen. The first is, that girls leave school at about the age of fifteen or sixteen, that is, as soon as the epoch of rapid sexual development arrives. It appears, moreover, that during this epoch, or the greater part of it, a German girl's education is carried on at home, by means of lectures or private arrangements. These, of course, are not as inflexible as the rigid rules of a technical school, and admit of easy adjustment to the periodical demands of the female constitution. The second is the traditional motherly supervision and careful regimen of the catamenial week. Evidently the notion that a boy's education and a girl's education should be the same, and that the same means the boy s, has not yet penetrated the German

mind. This has not yet evolved the idea of the identical education of the sexes. It appears that in Germany, schools, studies, parties, walks, rides, dances, and the like, are not allowed to displace or derange the demands of Nature. The female organization is respected. The third custom is, that German school-girls are not invited to parties at all. "All this comes after the school," says Dr. Hagen. The brain is not worked by day in the labor of study, and tried by night with the excitement of the ball. Pleasant recreation for children of both sexes, and abundance of it, is provided for them, all over Germany, — is regarded as necessity for them, — is made a part of their daily life; but then it is open-air, oxygen-surrounding, blood-making, health-giving, innocent recreation; not gas, furnaces, low necks, spinal trails, the civilized representatives of caudal appendages, and late hours.

Desirous of obtaining, if possible, a more exact notion than even a physician could give of the German, traditional method of

managing the catamenial function for the first few years after its appearance, I made inquiries of a German lady, now a mother, whose family name holds an honored place, both in German diplomacy and science, and who has enjoyed corresponding opportunities for an experimental acquaintance with the German regimen of female education. The following is her reply. For obvious reasons, the name of the writer is not given. She has been much in this country as well as in Germany; a fact that explains the knowledge of American customs that her letter exhibits.

My Dear Doctor, — I have great pleasure in answering your inquiries in regard to the course, which, to my knowledge, German mothers adopt with their daughters at the catamenial period. As soon as a girl attains maturity in this respect, which is seldom before the age of sixteen, she is ordered to observe complete rest; not only rest of the body, but rest of the mind. Many mothers

oblige their daughters to remain in bed for three days, if they are at all delicate in health; but even those who are physically very strong are obliged to abstain from study, to remain in their rooms for three days, and keep perfectly quiet. During the whole of each period, they are not allowed to run, walk much, ride, skate, or dance. In fact, entire repose is strictly enforced in every well-regulated household and school. A German girl would consider the idea of going to a party at such times as simply preposterous; and the difference that exists in this respect in America is wholly unintelligible to them.

As a general rule, a married woman in Germany, even after she has had many children, is as strong and healthy, if not more so, than when she was a girl. In America, with a few exceptions, it appears to be the reverse; and, I have no doubt, it is owing to the want of care on the part of girls at this particular time, and to the neglect of their mothers to enforce proper rules in this most important matter.

It has seemed to me, often, that the difference in the education of girls in America and in Germany, as regards their physical training, is, that in America it is marked by a great degree of recklessness; while in Germany, the erring, if it can be called erring, is on the side of anxious, extreme caution. Therefore beautiful American girls fade rapidly ; while the German girls, who do not possess the same natural advantages, do possess, as a rule, good, permanent health, which goes hand-in-hand with happiness and enjoyment of life.

Believe me,

Very truly yours,

——— ———.

JUNE 21, 1873.

This letter confirms the statement of Dr. Hagen, and shows that the educational and social regimen of a German school-girl is widely different from that of her American sister. Perhaps, as is intimated above, the German way, which is probably the Euro-

pean way also, may err on the side of too great confinement and caution; and that a medium between that and the recklessness of the American way would yield a better result than either one of them.

German peasant girls and women work in the field and shop with and like men. None who have seen their stout and brawny arms can doubt the force with which they wield the hoe and axe. I once saw, in the streets of Coblentz, a woman and a donkey yoked to the same cart, while a man, with a whip in his hand, drove the team. The bystanders did not seem to look upon the moving group as if it were an unusual spectacle. The donkey appeared to be the most intelligent and refined of the three. The sight symbolized the physical force and infamous degradation of the lower classes of women in Europe. The urgent problem of modern civilization is how to retain this force, and get rid of the degradation. Physiology declares that the solution of it will only be possible when the education of girls is made appro-

priate to their organization. A German girl, yoked with a donkey and dragging a cart, is an exhibition of monstrous muscular and aborted brain development. An American girl, yoked with a dictionary, and laboring with the catamenia, is an exhibition of monstrous brain and aborted ovarian development.

The investigations incident to the preparation of this monograph have suggested a number of subjects kindred to the one of which it treats, that ought to be discussed from the physiological standpoint in the interest of sound education. Some, and perhaps the most important, of them are the relation of the male organization, so far as it is different from the female, to the labor of education and of life; the comparative influence of crowding studies, that is of excessive brain activity, upon the cerebral metamorphosis of the two sexes; the influence of study, or brain activity, upon sleep, and through sleep, or the want of it, upon nutrition and development; and, most important of all, the true relation of education to

the just and harmonious development of every part, both of the male and female organization, in which the rightful control of the cerebral ganglia over the whole system and all its functions shall be assured in each sex, and thus each be enabled to obtain the largest possible amount of intellectual and spiritual power. The discussion of these subjects at the present time would largely exceed the natural limits of this essay. They can only be suggested now, with the hope that other and abler observers may be induced to examine and discuss them.

In conclusion, let us remember that physiology confirms the hope of the race by asserting that the loftiest heights of intellectual and spiritual vision and force are free to each sex, and accessible by each; but adds that each must climb in its own way, and accept its own limitations, and, when this is done, promises that each will find the doing of it, not to weaken or diminish, but to develop power. Physiology condemns the identical, and pleads for the appropriate education of

the sexes, so that boys may become men, and girls women, and both have a fair chance to do and become their best.