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THE
BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON THE EDUCATION OF FEMALE
CHILDREN.

AS education has for some time become such a prevailing topic, both in books and conversation, there is reason to hope that not only some good will arise from the subject being so often canvassed, but that it will lead those who are inclined to improve on what has been written, to investigate without prejudice the systems of all parties, and from them form a rational mode for their own adoption. Among the late writers, though many of the prevailing errors in educating the higher classes, have been fully pointed out, both in a satirical and a moral view, those of the middle classes in educating their female children, still leave room for much animadversion; by the middle classes of females, I allude to the daughters of shopkeepers, of farmers, and in short of all those who are above want, though not above industry.

In the periodical papers of the last century, from Addison, down to M'Kenzie, though we may perceive our ancestors were not entirely free from the desire of making their daughters any thing but useful members of society, they seem to have been less improvident in that respect than their descendants. Miss, learning to embroider a resemblance of Sterne's Maria, as true as beautiful, or of Thomson's Lavinia, or of any other picturesque object from a celebrated poet or novelist, was then not uncommon, and we read of many instances of young ladies, learning the spinet and fillagree-work as being essential at that time to *finish* the education of a female.

As we advance in the order of time we must notice the present change in the fashion of accomplishments: samp-

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lers and embroidery for the most part it is true are laid aside, in *genteel* seminaries of education, but what works are substituted for them? Imitations of Miss Linwood's pictures in worsted; blotted paper called drawings, daubs of colours on velvet called paintings, and the piano forte, the all commanding piano forte, succeeds the humbler spinet. If girls in the rank of life that I have mentioned were taught to do these things really well, I would not object to them, for some good might arise from their being able to instruct their future daughters in these branches of modern education, but I believe I do not exaggerate, when I say, that not one girl in twenty, after her escape from the boarding school ever attempts to practise what she has learned to perform, or rather what it is supposed she can perform from the schoolpiece in needle work sent as a show to the happy parents, arrayed in gaudy frame, and exhibited *en spectacle* to each admiring visitor, as Miss Eliza's or Miss Rosana's work, to the ruins of Rome in oil.

Parents are apt to imagine that their daughters have really executed these small but *miraculous* efforts of ingenuity; they seldom inquire whether the girls finished them entirely themselves, nor even suspect that they have no pretensions to their execution; but they wonder how soon this graphic talent is lost by their daughters, when in fact they never acquired it; all the trifles which they brought to their fond parents being partially or entirely the work of their master. Thus young women return home with the name of these acquirements, having also learned perhaps a few French idioms, a little babble of French, and an acquaintance with the novels of the day; novels they continue to read after their return home, and notwithstanding all the enchanting visions which they un-

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fold, of lords in disguise, baronets and gentlemen of immense fortunes, who throw themselves at first sight at their fair mistresses' feet, who have only peerless beauty to boast of; they condescend to step into real life, and marry perhaps a *tallow chandler* like your *Julia*.

I ask how are these women qualified to make useful wives for men in the middle classes of life; surely not by being able to play a few airs on the piano forte, or turning over the leaves of a library novel. How useful might a prudent girl make herself who is married to a tradesman, by having such a knowledge of arithmetic as to assist him in his accounts, and by superintending her family, and instructing her children in useful knowledge. But this would be fine lady, instead of these employments is occupied in the important duties of dress and visiting, and recurring to the beloved tales of imagination, which custom has made almost as necessary to her as her daily food, or should she condescend to appear in the shop and attend to its business she is dressed in the extravagance of fashion. If we turn to a country life, how respectable a character would the wife of a farmer or bleacher appear to us, who instead of these flimsy accomplishments, had learned to be economical and domestic, and whose mind was reasonably improved by instructive books.

I do not mean that she should officiate as a cook, or that she should educate her daughters like *Lady Bustle* in the 51st number of the *Rambler*, though by these she should serve her husband and her daughters, while by a contrary conduct she wastes his substance, and impairs her children's mind and virtue.

This knowledge is not carried to excess in our days, though we have our new works on domestic cookery; in Ireland particularly, the ignorance in which girls of all ranks are allowed to remain of domestic affairs, and such as are more particularly in the province of a female is highly reprehensible. In whatever situation a girl is placed it will be no disservice to her to know how to give directions to her household, and if things are done amiss to show that she knows "how

to find fault;" this a girl can only be taught at home where practice and precept may jointly assist each other, and this brings me to an important and final remark, that the education of girls should be domestic, and schools only used when girls are equally in want of parents and relatives to supply their place.

I have now concluded my observations on the errors of education in the middle classes, and I shall perhaps at some future time, extend my remarks, on the errors of education among people of a higher rank.

R. R.

For the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*.

THE SERVANT.

Continued from p. 85, No. XXVI.

"The lowly train in life's sequestered scene." BURNS.

IF the "*Cotter's Saturday Night*," of the poet Burns, contains a description of what Scotch cottagers really are, they differ widely from many of the Irish in cleanliness and economy, as well as in honesty and devotion. But "the clean hearthstone," the *thrifty* and economical wife of the poet's cotter, are to be understood with much allowance and limitation, if Miss Hamilton's character of Mrs. Mac Clarty, in the "*Cottagers of Glenburnie*," be generally applicable to the lower class of Scottish peasantry.

Jack's bride, whose name was Jenny, and some account of whom has been proposed, was descended from parents of negligent habits, in respect of cleanliness, defective in industry and domestic economy, inattentive observers of instituted worship, and not exemplary in strict honesty, especially in matters of little value. They inherited from their fathers a small farm, which, by industry and care, would have produced a competency of the necessaries of life, and enabled them to support a family in decency, and comfortable independence. But carelessness and mismanagement constrained them to sell one field after another, of their paternal estate, to their more industrious neighbours, until they were at length reduced to the situation of cotters. While they