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978-0-521-08048-4 - Feminists and Bureaucrats: A Study in the Development of Girls' Education in the Nineteenth Century

Sheila Fletcher

Frontmatter

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To Ralph, who was both

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A study in the development of girls' education
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SHEILA FLETCHER

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Preface

This is a study of the relative commitment of two groups of Victorian administrators, the Endowed Schools Commissioners and the Charity Commissioners, to promoting the education of girls under the Endowed Schools Act, 1869. It is based on a thesis which was supervised by Professor O. R. McGregor of London University (now Lord McGregor) and the sources used come largely from the Public Record Office.

The selection of data needs a word of explanation. The Record Office holds, in its Ed. 27 class, several thousand files which record the work of both sets of Commissioners in making Schemes under the Endowed Schools Acts to reorganise the grammar schools. Only some of these Schemes include provision for girls and it is this group which has been scrutinised, leaving unmapped a very large hinterland which must contain a number of cases where the Commissioners did their best to provide for girls but were unsuccessful. Ideally, of course, the whole field of their endeavour should be surveyed as the essential context of what they achieved in this particular area, but an enquiry of such magnitude lies beyond the individual researcher. It seems, in any case, unlikely that the whole corpus of material would reveal attitudes quite at variance with those which emerge from the 'successful' sample; and this view is confirmed by the pilot study of the West Riding of Yorkshire which forms the basis of chapter 2 and rests on a scrutiny of every Scheme establishing a secondary school in that area, whether it provided for girls or not.

I am obliged to the Comptroller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office for permission to make use of Crown Copyright material. I would also like to express my thanks to Jeffrey Ede, who was Keeper of the Public Record Office, and to Tom Donovan and Derek Steer, who were in charge of the Ashridge Repository at the time my research was undertaken. I am indebted to the Trustees of the British Library, to the Mistress and Fellows of Girton College,

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Cambridge, the Governors of the North London Collegiate School, the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement, the Goodwood Estate Company Ltd, the National Trust, the Girls' Public Day School Trust, the Governors of Berkhamsted School, the Governors of Nottingham High School and the Secondary Heads Association for permission to make use of archive material.

Over a period of several years, during the preparation of the thesis and of the book, I have had encouragement and critical advice from Dr Gillian Sutherland of Newnham College, Cambridge. To her more than anyone my thanks are due; it would indeed be hard to assess what I owe to her scholarship and generosity.

Many friends have put themselves out to discuss this work or help in other ways and I am most grateful to Barney Blackley, Cecily Blackley, Margaret Bottomley, Margaret Gardner, Pamela Hawker, Dick and Sylvia Wheeler, Emily White and Eric Wightman. Particular thanks are due to my friend and colleague Trevor May for his meticulous scrutiny of the final text. I am also indebted to Pat Bromley, Pauline Hughes and Doreen Jones for their co-operative and expert typing.

Finally, I must say I owe a great deal to the interest and judgement of my son-in-law, Robert Green, over a long period, and (over an even longer period) to the forbearance of my daughters.

January 1979

S.F.