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Emily Davies  
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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

**I**N any inquiry of a practical nature, intended to lead to some definite course of action, it is obviously necessary to start with a tolerably clear idea of the end in view—the object for which it is proposed to provide. In the case of education, definitions more or less satisfactory have already so

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often been given, that it might seem superfluous to go into the question again. As a matter of practice, however, it is found that, when it is attempted to apply the received definitions of the general objects of education to the case of women, they are usually questioned or modified, if not altogether set aside. When, for instance, Mr Maurice tells us that ‘the end of education itself is, as it has always been considered, to form a nation of living, orderly men,’ the definition will be accepted, with the tacit reservation that it applies only to men, in the exclusive sense of the word, and has nothing to do with the education of women. Again, when Milton, in his treatise on Education, lays down that the end of learning is ‘to

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repair the ruin of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him,' the language might be taken in a general sense ; and when he goes on to define a complete and generous education as 'that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war,' the words might still, perhaps, bear a common interpretation ; but as soon as he comes to describing in detail, 'how all this may be done between twelve and one-and-twenty,' it becomes evident that he is thinking of boys only. In the most recent writers, the tendency to regard general theories of education as applying

exclusively to that of men, is quite as strongly marked.

It seems, therefore, that in attempting to treat of female education, it is necessary once more to ask what we are aiming at, and to obtain, if possible, a clear understanding and agreement as to the end in view. What ought the educators of girls to be trying to make of them? What is the ideal towards which they ought to direct their efforts, the end to be desired as the result of their labours?

To these questions we shall probably receive one or other of two answers. Many persons will reply, without hesitation, that the one object to be aimed at, the ideal to be striven after, in the education of women, is to make good wives

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and mothers. And the answer is a reasonable one, so far as it goes, and with explanations. Clearly, no education would be good which did not tend to make good wives and mothers ; and that which produces the best wives and mothers is likely to be the best possible education. But, having made this admission, it is necessary to point out that an education of which the aim is thus limited, is likely to fail in that aim. That this is so will appear when the definition is transferred to the education of men. It will be admitted that a system of education which should produce bad husbands and fathers would prove itself to be bad ; and an education which produces the best husbands and fathers is likely to be in all

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respects the best ; because the best man in any capacity must be the man who can measure most accurately the proportion of all his duties and claims, giving to each its due share of his time and energy. A man will not be the better husband and father for neglecting his obligations as a citizen, or as a man of business. Nor will a woman be the better wife or mother through ignorance or disregard of other responsibilities. There is, indeed, a view of male education which, having worldly advancement for its ultimate object, regards it exclusively as a means of acquiring professional dexterity ; but such a conception of the purposes of education—however legitimate, in a limited and subordinate

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sense — when elevated into the position of the final goal, must be looked upon rather as a lapse from a higher standard, than as a principle deliberately maintained by any high-minded and thoughtful person. In disinterested schemes of male education, it is usually assumed, as a matter of course, that the great object is to make the best of a man in every respect, leaving him to adapt himself to specific relations, according to the state of life into which it shall please God to call him.

A similar idea seems to underlie the other, and more comprehensive reply, which will probably be given to our inquiry, namely, that the object of female education is to produce women of the

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best and highest type, not limited by exclusive regard to any specific functions hereafter to be discharged by them. This answer at once brings down upon us the terrible question, What is the best and highest type of woman? And as this question lies at the root of the whole matter, it cannot be passed by. Many people, indeed, talk as if it was a matter on which the world had long since made up its mind, and which might be assumed to be already decided. But when we ask what it is that the world has decided, it is difficult to obtain anything like a clear and unanimous answer. The ideal differs not only among different races, and in different ages, but most widely in our own country, and in



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modern times. Unanimity is scarcely to be found in any class of writers or thinkers, though on this point, of all others, some sort of agreement, at least between parents and teachers, would seem to be most essential. It may perhaps be of service, as a step towards a mutual understanding, to examine, though necessarily in a very imperfect and cursory manner, some of the most commonly received notions current on the subject.



## CHAPTER II.

### IDEALS.

**T**HERE is a theory afloat, extensively prevalent, and probably influencing many persons who have never stated it definitely to themselves, that the human ideal is composed of two elements, the male and the female, each requiring the other as its complement; and that the realisation of this ideal is to be found in no single human