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Last Words to Girls

On Life in School and after School

Maria Georgina Shirreff Grey
LAST WORDS TO GIRLS
LAST WORDS TO GIRLS

ON

Life in School and after School

BY

MRS. WILLIAM GREY

JOINT-AUTHOR OF 'THOUGHTS ON SELF-CULTURE.'

RIVINGTIONS

WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON

MDCCCLXXXIX
To the Pupils

of the

Girls' Public Day School Company

and of the

'Maria Grey' School

both 'Old Girls' and Present Girls

These 'Last Words'

Are affectionately dedicated

by

Their old Friend

Maria G. Grey.
PREFACE.

tion than an address to girls who are being educated. My justification for this mode of considering the subject rests on my conviction of the importance of making the young understand, as they approach the age of independent thought and action, the reason of the discipline, intellectual and moral, to which they have been subjected; the object for which they have been made to study so many things which have no apparent bearing on the needs and purposes of practical life. I believe that the teachers who can make this clear to their pupils will find it an immense help in carrying their attention and intelligence with them. *Cui bono?* is the cry of the school-boy and school-girl as well as of the cynical man and woman of the world, and if we can give a satisfying answer to it during school-life, the school work will be lifted at once from the dull drudgery of the treadmill to the free, glad exercise of new-felt powers, towards a clearly defined and desired end. Let us recognise in the school as in the state that the days of passive obedience, of blind plodding in old grooves, have passed away, and that we must take our pupils as our people into our confidence, and lead them where we cannot drive, to work out with us the purpose of their school-life,—the preparation for life after school.

In the case of girls, whom alone I am ad-
PREFACE.

dressing, I hold this initiation into the principles and methods of education even more important than with boys, for they are, in virtue of their sex, and whether they will or no, the educators of the next generation. It is, as I have striven to show, here and elsewhere, the special function of their womanhood. The home, where the woman’s influence is, as a rule, paramount, because ever-present and carried into every detail, is the real seed-ground of life. What is planted and cultivated there will determine, in all but rare cases, the general quality of the future crop. To women, then, it is of the highest importance, that they should learn to know the wheat from the tares; how the former can be aided, the latter checked in their growth; or, to drop figures, to understand what good education is; how habits of thought and conduct are formed, and to learn practically what and why knowledge is necessary to them, and how it is to be acquired.

This is what I have tried to tell in these Last Words to the girls in our schools, who will soon be leaving them to enter on the life of women. I am painfully conscious of their deficiencies, for they have been put together little by little, as my failing strength would allow, from the stores of the past which I have no longer power to supplement by fresh study. Such as they are, I yet trust they may give
some help to the rising generation of women, in using aright their new privileges of education, and steering their course wisely through the difficulties of a larger and freer life than their predecessors ever dreamt of; and I send them forth with a fervent prayer that they may reach the hearts and minds of some at least of the young creatures to whom they are addressed, and carry to them all the warmth of loving sympathy, all the weight of long and anxiously thought-out experience which I have striven to put into them.

MARIA G. GREY.

November 1888.
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