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Woman and The Home.

Ella P. Davis. '09.

In a country where public life is capable of so much further development, and where civil and political functions, which in other lands have come to be regarded as the rights of the common citizen, are so grudgingly bestowed upon men of even the highest intelligence, it is no wonder that the position of women is not an ideal one. Germany has, however, a woman question and a women's movement, and the progress which they have made during recent years is noteworthy, considering the prejudices and practical difficulties which have had to be confronted and

overcome at every step of the way. If anything could convince the sceptical that the German woman stands not where she did, it will be the fact that within the past year there has been established in Berlin a successful Domestic Club, open to aristocratic members, of whom six hundred are solemnly pledged to meet for discussion and social intercourse once a week. Nevertheless, there are those who doubt that the world moves.

Times have changed, and with them modes of thought, since a famous German educationist long ago justified the higher education of women on the ground that "A German husband ought not to be forced

by the intellectual shortsightedness and narrowness of the wife at her domestic hearth."

Nowadays the case for woman's higher education is supported by stronger and higher reasons, and chiefly by the fact, which no longer has to plead for recognition, that "woman is not undeveloped man, but divine," and so has a life of her own to live, an individuality of her own to cultivate, and, if may be, to realize." From this discovery has proceeded the woman's movement everywhere. Yet Germany is better off than most countries, in that it has long been in possession of abundant and excellent facilities for the higher education of its girls. It is one of the most

beneficial results of the hard-and-fast German principle of placing all schools - even those in private hands - under direct State control, that a high standard is universal, and the education which girls of the middle and higher class may obtain, even in small towns, is both liberal and inexpensive. The idea of sending girls of this class into life with a so-called education - an education in which mathematics stands merely for arithmetic, and the bare proprieties of grammar, and the study of languages for a questionable capacity to turn bad English into worse French would fill the instructress of a German "higher daughters' school" with

unspeakable horror. She would see to it - or  
the State in her stead, were she by any means  
indifferent that her girls thoroughly mas-  
tered the political and literary history of  
their own country and the outline, at least  
of European history and literature as well;  
that they were versed in Greek and Roman  
as well as Scandinavian mythology: that  
French and English were understood and  
spoken almost as a mother-tongue.

When German girls from the middle  
class upward learn school, it is, in fact,  
with a breadth of culture which would  
astonish those who are satisfied with the  
definition of that much-abused word  
"Education", which passes current in

rebuked in England. In later life, comparing rank with rank, it may be questioned whether the German woman is not on the whole better informed and better read than the man, though the latter's mental equipment may bear more visible traces of the formal school grinding which has been undergone. He will never forget his Latin and Greek so thoroughly are they drilled into him from the Sexta of his Gymnasium upward, but he is one-sided, and the distractions and disturbances of practical life do not seldom put a period to his further mental development. The German girl, who in the course of time takes upon



herself domestic responsibilities first in her parents' home, and later in one of her own, has also to contend with influences which are in general opposed to zeal for study; but all the spare moments she has are devoted to books. To these she instinctively flies in her leisure just as a man resorts to his newspaper. The very detachment from public life which training and conventionality have imposed upon <sup>her</sup> women while it unquestionably narrows their range of thought, has the effect of throwing them upon their own resources, and so it happens that what they lose in knowledge of the world and in wider human interests they gain in the cultivation of intellectual and, still more,

of aesthetic tastes, in the possession and enjoyment of a quieter outlook on life and a happier feeling of contentment with their lot. For the German woman is neither restless nor ambitious, her one ambition is to see the household over which she rules orderly, harmonious, and attractive to those for whom it exists. But this does not mean that she is of necessity a sort of domestic drudge. The idea most frequently associated among English folk with the German Hausfrau is an absolute travesty of the reality, for the picture which the word calls to the mind of the average person is that of a middle-aged woman drudgily dressed, busying about between

kitchen and dining-room with a bundle of keys at her waist and the odour of dried herbs clinging to her vestments. The picture is altogether imaginary, having served its day and generation faithfully, it might well be discarded.

Nevertheless, it would be idle to pretend that German women are in general willing to fall in with the lot which contented their mothers and grandmothers; and the problem which exercises the minds of the advocates of emancipation, is how to secure to them a legitimate place and influence outside the home without any sacrifice of the high natural ideal of home and of woman's place in it.

Where women have suffered hitherto  
is in the refusal to them of proper scope  
for the exercise of their capacities. They  
might be educated to the highest pitch,  
but they have been tolerated in few of  
the spheres which men have immemorially  
set apart for the special play of their  
own activities. It is probable that the  
average man would rub his eyes in  
surprise were he asked to believe the  
position of his wife and sisters is not  
in every respect what Divine Providence  
intends it to be. In his view the home  
is the stage upon which woman should  
play the mild drama of her life, and  
out of the home she is out of her

province. In the words of the proverb,  
"The house is woman's world, the world is  
man's house." Yet to suggest that there is  
any such thing as a conscious repression  
of woman would be absurd.

The majority of the universities have  
had the enlightenment to open their doors  
to women, and while permission to acquire  
the doctor's degree is rarely granted, facili-  
ties for studying side by side with men  
are being afforded.

Encouraged by this friendly movement  
in the seats of learning, women are more  
and more pushing their way in professional  
life.

What has been said is enough to show

that the woman question in Germany, while it has made large strides, has a great task before it. On the whole, its aims are far from being intemperate. Here and there are to be found extremists who plead not merely for equality of opportunity as between the sexes but for the fiction of identity of condition, and who forgetful of the backward state of the men's question in Germany, seek to attain at first more ideals which are recognized as distant by the more ardent reformers in England. But, in general, the movement progresses within narrow limits and on moderate lines, and herein consists its principal hostage.

*1/2 success.*