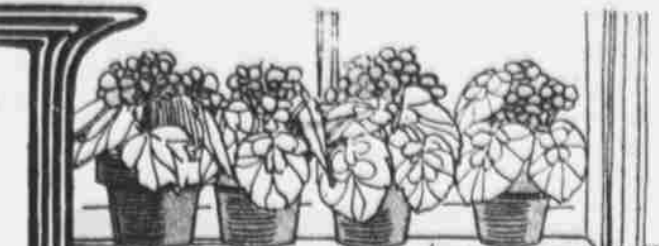




# SCHOOL TEACHING WORSE THAN SLAVERY

## WOMEN OFFERED AS SACRIFICE TO RESPONSIBILITY



"But I will not be a school teacher," said the young person, stamping her foot. "School teachers never can do as they please. I will be a newspaper woman—they do. She went after what she wanted and is now doing it with at least the satisfaction of having the work she wants and likes."

### Chances of Marriage Ruined.

"Usually the mother who doesn't want her daughter to go into business or to go downtown and work has her way and the girl goes into the school work. When she does, disintegration begins. It is only a question of how much resistance she has mentally and physically before she gets out before it is apparent. She is soon well on the road to becoming a maimed nervous system. If she has enough combativeness in her to stick to her pleasures, and enough strength to carry them on with her work for a little while, she may marry."

"The chances of matrimony are much greater against the buyer in this kind of a game of policy than is usually supposed. First, of course, she spends all of her prettiest and best years immured, so far as men are concerned. They do not see her when they would want her, and when she gets old it is not only matrimony to which she is not eligible, but the schools don't want her either."

"But this isn't the half. There never was anything truer than that three years of school teaching make a woman unfit to live with. She is positively depleted of mental and emotional charm unless she has the gift in a great quantity. The drain upon her nerves has been so great that she has positively no reserves of the good temper and diplomacy to draw upon, which are necessary to cajole the ordinary man into being a model or happy husband. She is not only short on the attractions of high spirits and physical prettiness which enable her to get a husband, but unless she has as many years to recuperate as she has put in she is positively unfit for matrimony. It is a fact of observation that highly nervous temperaments subjected to the strain of teaching for a few years before marriage are less successful in the physical part of motherhood."

### Men Prejudiced Against Teachers.

"The prejudice which men are said to have against school teachers my observation makes me think exists even more than is generally believed. They fear that they are aggressive and opinionated and fond of control, and I think that it is easy for them to get to be. I know that since I taught it has never been half so easy for me to give up my own opinion to that of somebody else as it was when I was doing other things. Any teacher will tell you that you can't teach a little while before you find yourself telling everybody how to do things. And another thing I noticed was that after I had taught a year or a little over I could control the school by simply standing and looking at the children, and almost unconsciously on my part, too. The wish to do so had become so much a part of my mental attitude that it exercised a positive effect. Once started, this is a quality that dominates the possessor and radiates from her more than she has any idea of."

"As to her fondness for children, the worst of it is that a teacher loses the fondness for them that she naturally possesses. Why shouldn't she? They are drawing all the time in a terrible quantity upon all her best qualities of heart and soul. She is constantly giving out of her best and never getting any chance to put anything in. She does not realize this at first, but when she does, if she has already reached the physical state where it gets on her nerves, she begins in her heart to think of the children as her natural enemies. She feels like closing every part of her sympathy and herself against this terrible onslaught of young life, which is sapping her body and soul. You know, don't you, that you never can relax as long as there is a child in front of you?"

### Love for Children Dies.

"The worst is the irritating effort at constant discipline and the equally irritating effort to make a good showing in the eyes of the many overseers and supervisors, which is necessary to keep her job. These are, of course, the real obstacles which prevent her recuperating in the happy quietness with which one needs to affiliate with children."

"I have only known one teacher who was able to keep her love for them through many years of the work, so that you would know instinctively that it was the real thing. She asked to be put down in the lower grades, where she could really lavish all her affections on them. She has a lovely way with them and would make a beautiful mother, but the chances are that this career will be cut off from her. She is 33 and she looks 50. 'I tried so hard to perfect myself and to work up to a fine point in my work,' she told me, 'that I gradually gave up my chances to go anywhere.' She was one of the rare ones that would be all things that the most exacting could expect of her, and her lonely life is the pathetic forfeit."

### Sacrifice Great; Reward Small.

"This self-effacement is the boggy which all school teachers dread. They understand, better than any one else, the greatness of the sacrifice and the smallness of the rewards. You know, all the reward there is for this

**P**RETTY Mrs. E. W. Preston, formerly Miss Mabel Peck, for four years a teacher at the Raymond school in Chicago, has definite and original views upon school teaching as a profession for women which she has drawn from long experience and observation. "They are not really original at all," she says, "they are held by thousands of teachers, the only difference being that they are afraid to express them."

Now this is just what Mrs. Preston is not. With infinitely great restraint in the choice of language, but nevertheless in terms radical enough to startle the school trustees, she declares the following things:

It is the last profession in the world for the average woman to choose. Scrubbing is better.

It not only debars her, it positively unfits her for matrimony.

She walks around on a loaded mine of hypocrisy because she glibly professes love for an occupation which it is her most passionate prayer to be delivered from. If she doesn't she loses her job.

Sooner or later she is bound to hate her work. She must, because it is a vampire that preys upon her personality.

### Nihilistic Words From Pretty Lips.

Now, the woman who says these things is so pretty that her worst enemy couldn't say that she is soured or imbibed even by school teaching experiences. She has such a gentle and altogether "nonschool teaching" way of uttering her opinions that nobody could call her rabid. She shows the reflective faculty so plainly while talking that no one would call her superficial. Truly, from her pretty lips the most nihilistic utterances turn to pearls.

Moreover, she has perspective in her view, for she has worked in other positions. Two years in the Chicago public library, a year in the treasury department at Washington, and work on a metropolitan daily give her conclusions a range which classifies them as expert. She has the authority of having had her four years of school work pronounced highly successful by superiors, and conceded so by associates. Her happy desertion of her post for matrimony in so short a time would also exempt her from being predisposed to a hopeless view.

### Teaching Worse Than Slavery.

"I first began to think strongly upon the subject outside of my own personal view," said Mrs. Preston, "when an ex-school teacher said to me one day that she felt as if the seven years she had taught were just seven years lost out of her life. 'Do you feel that way, too?' I said. 'I know it had been that way with me, but I hadn't seen that others shared the conviction. Afterward I became convinced that it was practically universal.'"

"Now, if I had a daughter I should prefer that she should do anything in the world that she had the slightest inclination for rather than teach, if it was only to scrub. I don't believe that there is one girl in a thousand who chooses the profession because she has thought the matter out and decided that it is what she wants. When I see the endless procession of girls going to normal every year to prepare for the life I can only think of the sacrifice to respectability upon which their parents are offering them up."

### Parents Push Girls Into Schools.

"It is the fathers and mothers that push girls into it. The girls themselves are most of them without any opinions as to why and whereofers of the matter when they begin. But the fathers and mothers think that it is so perfectly respectable and so safe that they pick it out for their daughters and begin early to talk them into it. Once in a while there is an exception and a girl forms her own opinions as to what she wants to do like a boy. This is only in families where the girls are brought up to think of a career as well as the boys."

"In one family I knew the mother told the daughter when she was still a little thing that she must work hard, so that when she grew up she could be a school teacher.



sort of thing is that once in a great while a parent, with more than ordinary chances of salvation will come to you and tell you how much she feels that you have really done for her child. This is the only inspiring thing that ever happens in the profession, except, of course, the funny things the children say—and it is far from happening often, as the attitude of the ordinary parent is that you are favored among young women if you are allowed to teach her Johnny."

"One of the most depressing things about the work to the average girl is that she can't be honest about what she thinks. There is a little fiction expected of school teachers, you know, that they love their work. It is a creed. Many teachers recite it glibly. 'None deny it. Yes, there was one. She was a girl with lots of brains, no feelings, endlessly smiling, and pessimistically good humored. She got the children up wonderfully in their grades the first year, besides having time to state frankly and frequently that she hated her school and hated the work. The next year she was removed. But she is the only one I remember.'"

"Sometimes you hear a new teacher say, 'I am tired of teaching already,' or 'I never can like this kind of work.' 'Hush,' says one of the older ones of the order, 'don't ever let anybody hear you breathe anything like that.'"

"You will find, if you should ask, that the young teachers whom you see planning for automobile rides, and parties, and balls always fail to mention these matters to the principal. There is many a school in Chicago whose atmosphere is frosty to things of that sort. Should the teacher be ill for a half day and the little diversion had become known, she would soon hear of it. 'You can't go out in the evenings and attend to your school work.'"

"The average educator in a superior position points out technical study as a means of getting back the heart and soul that a girl gives out in her work to young children. She will have none of the theory that this course exhausts rather than accumulates. One of the trials of the teacher who is honest with herself is that she has to play up to an opinion at which she inwardly rages."

### Teaching Destroyer of Girls.

"If every teacher said what she thought she would say that she recognizes the work as her arch enemy and destroyer. If every ex-teacher would say what she thought she would say that the nightmare of her life is the fear that she may some time have to go back to it. 'If the girl who is in it could be honest about it and get credit and sympathy outright, and openly pursue every possible recreation and diversion to offset it, her position would become more possible. But the only time she will speak her mind is when she is on a vacation.'"

"A girl librarian had a school teacher from a small town come up to visit her. The girl in the library remarked that she loved her work. The other looked at her as if she was demented. 'Love your work! Did you say love?' Thereupon the young school mistress, who so far had not succumbed to the depressing effects of her position, went into peals of laughter. Yet she was considered AI in the town in which she taught."

"I don't say that this is the way it should be, you know. It is only the way I truly believe that it is in ninety-nine cases. The conditions are certainly such that girls would do well to see if there was not some other work to which they were better fitted, and which they might at least have a chance to say they love their work after a few years. At present the only reasons that I can see for a girl going into teaching are that she has abnormal strength, phlegmatic temperament, and a conviction of a lifelong vocation. The alternative is that she has definite plans for getting out."