

Dec. 28th 1864.

Dear Sir

AL/1726

It is very good of you to take my troublesome letters so kindly. I have written to Professor Bernard, sending him the list of names & some other papers.

We have not been able to find out yet whether girls' schools are to be included in your inquiry. Lord Lyttelton told us he thought they would be, as a matter of course, but it has since been reported

that the Commission will not undertake them unless strongly persuaded to do so. We shall think it very hard if the Commissioners narrow their field by shirking half their duty.

I don't know much about the lady members of the College of Preceptors, but I fancy they don't stand very high. It does not seem to be quite the sort of place at which one would expect to find ladies, & people are naturally as awestruck about that as anything else in choosing a governess or school. I think

too that their standard must be rather low, as several girls who had passed their examⁿ, failed in ours last year.

I hope you do not suspect our Committee of wishing for anything so repugnant to one's taste & feelings as "a neck and neck race between the sexes." As far as I know, we should all be very sorry to see boys & girls racing with each other as boys v. girls, on any course. Our idea is that women may learn & labour even in the same field as men, without a

thought of rivalry. For instance, girls
are taught to spell, because it is
supposed to be a good thing in
itself, not with any intention of
encouraging them to outshine their
brothers. Or, to take another example.
When Mr. Gaskell & Miss Yonge &
Mrs. Oliphant write novels, I suppose
they enter into competition, as novelists,
with Kingsley & Trollope, but surely
without a suspicion of rivalry
between women as women & men
as men. It seems to me that you
may carry out the same principle
all thro'. that is - that you may
quite safely let women do anything
they like, as well as they can.

Probably they will never do so well as men. I mean to say that very likely there will always be some men in every field who will do better than any woman. But that does not seem to be a reason for hindering women from doing their best, & choosing for themselves what they will try at. It is not likely that they will ever want to be soldiers or sailors or navvies. If they do attempt things for which they are unfit, they will be taught their folly by failure, but I fancy you scarcely know

yet what occupations are really, & what only conventionally, appropriate. It seems odd that it should be considered quite endurable, if not entirely desirable, that young girls should be working barefooted on wet clay, helping to make bricks, (as I have often seen them doing) while men are cutting & dressing ladies' hair. We have not treated the Examinations question as connected with the employment of women, our object having been to claim a sound education for women, apart from considerations as to

what mercantile use they may make of it, but as regards fitness, the cases are perhaps analogous. It is difficult to see why, apart from habit, it should be good for girls to learn German & not good for them to learn Greek. As far as use goes, one would fancy that modern languages must be more necessary to middle class men than to women, as they travel more & are more likely to want French & German in their business transactions.

I shall be very glad to see you here at any time that may be most convenient to you. I am generally

at home in the evening, but perhaps
you will kindly let me know
beforehand that I may make sure
of not missing you.

I remain, Dear Sir,

Yours very truly

Emily Davies.