

WOMEN IN THE PROFESSIONS IN ENGLAND

Before the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in 1919, many professions governed by professional bodies were entirely closed to women in England, with the result that women have so newly entered into them that there has yet hardly been time to show what difficulties they will meet or what headway they will ultimately make.

In Medicine, however, the chief of the older professions, in which Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson received the first English degree given to a woman in 1866, their success has been considerable, and the number of women doctors has steadily increased.

A difficulty has however lately arisen in London with regard to the training of women medical students, six of the training schools which were opened to women during the War having now decided to admit men students only. There remains therefore only the London School of Medicine for Women (for women only) and the University College Hospital Medical School, which admits 12 women students. The University of London has, however, recently issued a Report on the Medical Education of Women Undergraduates, which recommends that the medical schools concerned be invited to consider the possibility of admitting a quota of women students, and there the matter stands at the moment. In the provinces co-education in the medical schools is general, but it is often difficult for women to obtain minor hospital appointments on completion of their training, owing largely to difficulties of accommodation in the hospitals themselves.

With regard to the newer professions, which up to 1919 had been a male preserve, the competitive examination for the Administrative Grade of the Civil Service was thrown open to women as a result of the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, and at the same time, or in anticipation of the passing of the Act, the following chartered or incorporated societies governing professions, which had previously been closed to women, were likewise opened:-

Inns of Court
Law Society
Society of Incorporated Accountants & Auditors
Institute of Chartered Accountants
Institute of Actuaries.
Society of Naval Architects
Institute of Bankers
Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute
Land Agents' Society
Surveyors' Institution
Chartered Institute of Secretaries
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Almost all the Engineering Institutions and Societies.

Civil Service. In 1925, for the first time, women competed in the open examination for the administrative grade of the Civil Service; two passed, taking the ninth and twelfth places respectively, and a third, who was twenty-fourth, also received an appointment. Since then two more women have been successful

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in this examination. Many women are employed in the executive grade, and in a recent examination for 87 vacancies in this grade, for which 600 candidates entered, 28 women were successful.

Law. In 1921, two years after the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, there were already 20 women barristers, and by ~~July 1926~~ ^{Feb. 1926}, 144 women had qualified. In ~~that year, also~~, Miss Margaret Kidd was briefed in the House of Lords, and Miss Joan Clarkson before the Privy Council. In January of ~~this year~~, Miss Venetia Stephenson was counsel for the defence in a murder trial, being the first woman barrister to defend on a capital charge in England. At least two women solicitors are partners in firms.

Accountants. By 1926, 36 women had qualified as incorporated accountants, and at least one woman chartered accountant is running a successful firm of her own.

Surveyors. ^{(1936) 13}
employed in the office of a District Valuer.

Engineers. In 1926, the Women's Engineering Society had a membership of over 200. The firm of Atalanta at Brixton employs women only in all its processes. A large scheme of rural electrification in Devonshire has been organised by Miss Patridge, and is being run mainly by women.

Architects. The Royal Institute of British Architects has always been open to women, and the first woman passed the qualifying examination in 1898. But the Architectural Association School, which is by far the largest of the Architectural Training Schools, and of which the Royal Institute of British Architects is the governing body, was only opened to women in October 1917. When in 1922 three women were elected Associates, there had been no such election for 22 years. In 1922, Miss Elisabeth Scott submitted the winning design for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon in a competition in which there were 72 entrants of both sexes, from Great Britain, the United States and Canada.

The Church. The Church of England does not admit women to its ministry, but there are women ministers in three other religious denominations, and the Wesleyan Methodists at last year's conference agreed that women should be permitted to offer themselves for their ministry on the same terms as men, which means that by 1931 women will be able to enter this ministry also if they so desire. *Since this date, however, the Wesleyan Methodists have postponed the question of the admission of women to the ministry until after the discussion as to the proposed union of the Methodist Bodies (of the U.K. & W. & A. & I.) which Wesleyan have to plan.*

The Effect of Marriage on Employment.
In the Civil Service, women are at present compelled to resign on marriage, but the question of the removal of the marriage bar is one which will be discussed by the Royal Commission on the Civil Service which is to be appointed shortly. Many Local Authorities, including the London County Council dismiss women teachers and medical officers of health on marriage, though this custom is by no means universal. There has, however, been a marked decrease in the number of married women employed as teachers, as is shown by the following figures relating to teachers in public elementary and special schools, which were supplied by the Minister of Education in the House of Commons last year:-

* Women Surveyors: Misses Mary Besh, C. H. C. Clay, D. G. Crew, E. G. Crickmay, I. E. Hort, I. T. Martin (Mrs Barclay), M. A. Page, E. E. Perry, M. J. Playle, F. P. Priddle, B. J. Sherston, Barbara Thrupp, P. E. Wardle.

	<u>1921</u>		<u>1927</u>	
Single and widows	98,646) proportion	104,144) proportion
Married	18,676) of married	14,430) of married
		women 18.9%		women 13.9%

Many of the Universities and Colleges, however, employ married women on their teaching staffs.

As regards private employment, it is difficult to say whether the fact of marriage adversely affects the chances of employment. Cases have, however, come to our knowledge in which women have lost their employment through marriage, but no general rule can be laid down.

The most pressing consideration before English professional women at the moment is that of Equal Pay for Equal Work. Women Civil Servants receive a lower rate of remuneration than men, or, where they start equal, increase at a slower rate and reach a lower maximum salary. The pay of women teachers was fixed by the Burnham Award at four-fifths of that of men teachers. There is, moreover, a tendency in the outside world to follow the lead of the Government in this respect. In certain professions, however, as for example, medicine and journalism, equal pay is received.

With regard to opportunity of advancement, it may still be said that a woman needs to be better qualified than a man to receive the same appointment, and the possibility of her retirement on marriage is a factor often taken into consideration when the question of appointing a woman arises.

Books

The following books will be found useful:-

- Brittain, Vera. WOMEN'S WORK IN MODERN ENGLAND (Noel Douglas) 1928. 6/-
- Blainey, J. THE WOMAN WORKER AND RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION (London & National Society for Women's Service) 1928 1/-

The latter gives a short account of the position of women in industry, and has an appendix showing the comparative rates of wages received by men and women workers in the principal industries.

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