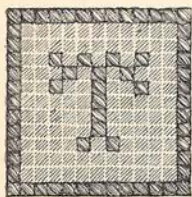


UNIVERSITY LIFE FOR WOMEN.

BY BARBARA FOXLEY, FORMERLY SCHOLAR OF NEWNHAM COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.



THE gathering of some hundreds of past and present students last June at Newnham College, Cambridge, attracted no little attention. Its object could not fail to interest all our old friends, for it was the presentation of the portrait of the lady whose wisdom guided the College through the difficulties of its earlier days, and whose kindly help and sympathy will be gratefully remembered by all who came under her care. But the gathering has a claim on the interest of a wider circle than that of the friends and well-wishers of a single institution. It may be said to mark the fact that University Life for Women has ceased to be an experiment, and has taken its place for good or for ill in the educational system of this country.

When the idea of Colleges for ladies was first seriously propounded, the little group of University men who supported the scheme were regarded as harmless lunatics. As the scheme took form and shape, contempt grew into horror. Such an unprecedented innovation could but lead to the most disastrous results. Women would become masculine in their manners and tastes; they would despise the sacred duties of a wife and a mother; they would become imbued with the current scepticism; and last, but not least, their presence in the midst of the undergraduate world would lead to endless complications.

The time has now come when we can look back into the past, as well as forward into the future; we can appeal to experience to refute these prophecies of evil.

1. Has University life made women masculine in taste and manners, and unfitted them for the duties of home?

It was not so very long ago that Fanny Kemble was astonished, and almost shocked, to find her friend and hostess, Mrs. Grote, attired in a great-coat with many capes, like a coachman's. Since then we have unfortunately become only too familiar with young ladies (?) who affect a semi-masculine attire, and a wholly masculine freedom of speech. But the fast young lady is a type almost unknown among the lady-students. In fact, the wife of a well-known University man once said to me, "If I meet a particularly quiet looking girl, I say to myself, 'That is a lady-student.'" Nowhere have I heard it more consistently and reverently asserted that a woman's true sphere is the home. Most of the ladies rather pride themselves on their domestic accomplishments. Among my own contemporaries were some whose nimble fingers could wield the needle as well as the pen, and produce with equal ease a copy of Latin verses or a fashionable bonnet. Others could send up a dinner not to be despised by the most fastidious of College Fellows. I can testify

from personal experience to their skill in another essentially "feminine" occupation—viz., sick-nursing. A bad sprain kept me for many weeks a prisoner to my sofa, and entirely dependent on the kindness of those around me. That kindness never failed me. One brought me my meals, another tidied my room, and supplied me with books, &c., for the morning's work; fruit, flowers, and light literature flowed in upon me; and one lady, with whom I had previously the barest speaking acquaintance, came daily for many weeks to bandage the injured limb. I am not sure that those weeks of forced inactivity were not some of the happiest of my College life. Another very feminine characteristic of the lady-student is the care and taste devoted to the adornment of her rooms. Though few have the means or the inclination for lavish expenditure, these temporary dwellings are nearly always bright and attractive with that indefinable "something" which constitutes "home." Surely, in the face of facts like these, it should be impossible to repeat the old accusation that University life unfits women for their true sphere.

2. A more serious charge is that of encouraging scepticism. If woman's mission is to "look up, and lift up," an irreligious woman is surely unfit for her work. Few, even among the most sceptical men, but would sympathise with the beautiful words of the poet—

"Leave there thy *sister* while she prays."

Though the charge is a serious one, it rests, I think, on a very insufficient basis. The vast majority of the students are professing Christians, all the various denominations having their representatives. No doubt there are a few to whom the blessing of faith is denied (let us hope for a time only), but among them too there are earnest seekers after truth. The various College societies for the study of the Bible and other religious books, show that there is no lack of interest in this all-important matter. One such society, in my own time, read through "Trench on the Parables;" another studied selected portions of the Greek Testament. A Christian woman will not find herself alone; she will meet with many among her fellow-students who share her faith. The beautiful daily service at the College chapels, the opportunities of hearing the greatest preachers of the day from the University pulpit, are privileges which are not met with everywhere, and of which not a few of the students avail themselves. A University training is considered almost essential for our clergy: why, then, should it be injurious to their sisters?

3. Leaving this serious subject, we pass to the third of the prophecies of evil uttered by those who opposed the opening of University life to women. It is so frivolous that it hardly requires an answer. It is enough to say that the lady-students are indeed *ladies*, and not silly school-girls.

University and College lectures have in many cases been thrown open to women, and I never heard of any case in which these kindnesses had been repented of. The results of the various degree examinations have proved that the lady-students are neither the least industrious, nor yet the least gifted among the pupils.

I have tried to meet a few of the popular objections to University life for women, and to show that these drawbacks are, to a large extent, imaginary. It has its own difficulties, its own temptations. What condition of life has not? I can only briefly touch upon these now. The clever girl, like the clever youth, is apt to attach too much importance to mere intellectual power; and there is much in a University life to foster this error. I doubt, however, whether it has any

worse results than a little temporary "priggishness," which soon wears off. Then, again, there is the often-exaggerated, but very real, danger of over-work. I believe that the proportion of lady-students who do over-work is very small, and, in most cases, the mischief may be traced to excessive study at school or at home, and before University life was begun.

There are many other points which I should like to dwell upon, but they lie beyond the limits of a brief paper. Suffice it to say that hundreds of women, amid the strain of professional work—aye, and amid the serene happiness of home life—look back to the brief years of their University life as years not merely of mental culture and social enjoyment, but of noble aims and high enthusiasms, which will surely not prove unfruitful in their life-work.

WHAT TO WEAR.

CHIT-CHAT ON DRESS. BY OUR PARIS CORRESPONDENT.



AN APPOINTMENT.

FEBRUARY is too early even to think about changing winter clothes, though when the sun shines they have an ugly habit of looking shabby, for winter damp and dust destroy the freshness of materials more than wear and tear. I shall, therefore, advise that winter mantles be bought early in the year; the best of

most becoming shapes I have seen was drawn well into the figure at the back, and ornamented with handsome gimps and chenille, and passementerie in front; from the waist it was slightly cut away transversely, which made it far less heavy and more easy to walk in.

People in England often wear close-fitting long-basqued jackets, bordered with fur. One of the newest is a shot velvet, brocaded as well as shot, and bordered with fur.

Fur flounces appear on mantles and on dresses. The rage for fur is nearly as great when the Duchess of Edinburgh came over from Russia as a bride, and we seemed to think that, her country being associated with fur-wearing, we did her honour by appearing in it.

A most useful evening wrap is a red plush cape, reaching to the waist, made with high shoulders, and trimmed with black lace. Many of the richer mantles, however, are sufficiently magnificent to be suitable for either morning or evening wear, as, for example, one of stone plush with a raised brocade upon it of brown flowers, shaded with the stone, alternating with bands of brown velvet, on which are large pine passementeries of the two tones. This is bordered with plush and chenille fringe.

Tailor-made dresses have established as great a reputation in Paris as in London, and English women who prefer—as most of them do—these for winter wear may be quite happy that French women of fashion are doing the same. The severity of style which characterises them has been slightly modified by the silk, satin, and brocaded bibs, and a greater flow to the skirts.

Those who can afford it have plain velvets made by tailors, and most of the best French dresses are composed of dark green or steel-grey velvet, with heavy chenille trimmings. When black velvet is used, the

them will be seen in the improving weather, and when taken into wear again next winter, they will be little the worse.

The winter sales are worth considering, for the reductions in mantles are most important. They are large and bulky things to keep in stock, and the shop-keeper is glad to sell them somewhat over cost price, instead of putting them by in the hope of a future large profit. The shapes are so various—there are the short jackets for young people, and the richer mantles—more than half of which are trimmed with marabout. This shows up well on the rich velvet brocades, laid on Sicilienne and satin. One of the