

# OUR GIRLS

## A DAY AT VASSAR.

**S**NUGLY bestowed among the beautiful foot-hills which roll picturesquely between the Highlands and the Taghanic Mountains, with the Hudson flowing not far from its rich estate, Vassar College owes a debt of gratitude to its location. Quitting the Poughkeepsie station, a short drive of two miles over a pleasant road which winds about under arching trees soon brings one

use for his modest million than to devote it to the spiritual, mental, and physical instruction of young women, when as yet college courses were heard of only in connection with the brothers of the family. "It occurred to me," said Mr. Vassar, "that woman, having received from her Creator the same intellectual constitution as man, has the same right as man to intellectual culture and development."



ON THE LAKE IN WINTER.

to the lodge entrance. Here one gets a direct glimpse of the great central hall built by Matthew Vassar at a cost of a half-million dollars; and over this entrance, facing the building, a huge clock, like the eye of the giant Polyphemus, stares unwinkingly out, and warns maids scholastic of the flight of time and the approach of examinations and vacations.

The epoch of college-making, at least of the making of women's colleges, has been as brief as fruitful. The year which closed the Civil War saw the opening of Vassar College, the pioneer in this good path, and because Vassar has successfully met and grappled with the many problems concerning the higher education of women, the way for her younger sisters has been far easier than it would otherwise have been.

Vassar was founded while the martial spirit was still abroad in the land, when courage and energy, devotion and loyalty, were working out in many ways, and for this reason, perhaps, the democratic spirit is particularly strong here, and distinctions of wealth and position have little place beside the better distinctions of character, disposition, and scholarship.

A wise man—far wiser than his day—was Mr. Matthew Vassar, the benevolent brewer who could find no better

For the physical he provided, first, a resident physician, then an innovation on established custom; second, a well-equipped riding-school later transformed into a museum; and third, another innovation, a system of gymnastic practice with a teacher.

But not more directly have these contributed to the health and comfort of Vassar students than has the excel-



THE LODGE.



A VASSAR GIRL'S PRIVATE KITCHEN.

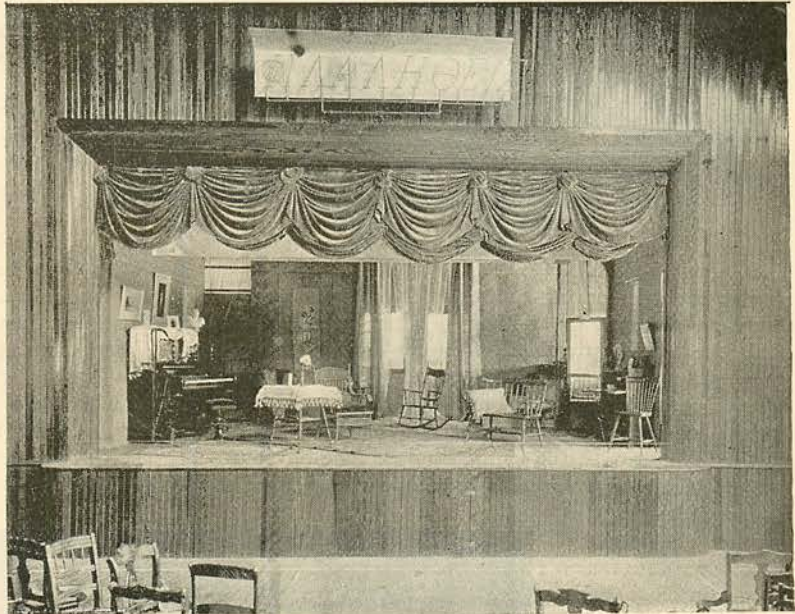
structors, besides providing recitation-rooms, general parlors, residence rooms for the president and his family, general offices, and library, yet one is not conscious of the presence of a great company or of the amount of mental and other industries transacted under its roof. The home-like parlors are central and hospitable; in the messenger's office all sorts of information is courteously proffered, and pleasant young ladies are in waiting to guide one over the building or transact errands of love, mercy, or business.

Those delightful little suites of rooms,

lent arrangement of rooms in the dormitory. On three floors of the great building, which is five hundred feet long, five stories high, and has two large transverse wings, small hallways extend back and open into suites of four or five rooms each. So perfect is the arrangement of rooms that although this great building shelters three hundred students and a large force of in-

consisting of three or four bedrooms and a common parlor, every Vassar girl remembers with delight. If the warning sign "Engaged" is not out, we may knock at the door and catch a glimpse of a cozy parlor adorned with pictures, bric-à-brac, books, and the omnipresent divan with its tempting pillows. The well-ventilated, always single bedrooms open from the parlor, and the little family of students who make their school home so attractive can always command hours of retirement or of sociability. Tempting spreads are suggested by the chafing-dish and alcohol lamp, and great clusters of *fleurs-de-lis*, yellow lilies, and boxes of ferns testify to woodland tramps through the glorious wooded region in the vicinity.

Besides this great hall, a new and handsomely-furnished dormitory for one hundred students, called Strong Hall, is near at hand, and there is a fine gymnasium, the gift of alumni, a music hall and art gallery, a museum, an observatory, and the Vassar Brothers' Laboratory of physics and chemistry.



STAGE SET FOR "HALL" PLAY.



IN THE LABORATORY.

"How are they governed?" is an interesting problem to the visitor in this great household. No rules are promulgated by the faculty, yet the daily life moves on simply, quietly, and with great apparent freedom. The secret of it all, so the student-president will tell you, lies in the organization known as the Students' Association of Vassar College. On entering, each student is given her choice of being governed by one of two powers: the Student Association

or the faculty. The mischievous girl who hopes to escape the Scylla of community discipline falls into the Charybdis of government by the higher powers. But the general spirit of the college is so excellent that cases involving severe discipline are almost unknown.

The rules of the Student Association are mainly preventive of disturbance to students and are classed under



THE GYMNASIUM.

provisions for securing quiet, for chapel attendance, for daily exercise, and for the hour of retiring. Quiet in the main building is provided for from ten at night to seven in the morning, and noise in the corridors or the playing of musical instruments is not expected at hours when they would be annoying. Exercise for one hour a day, either in the open air or in the gymnasium, is required, but active committee work, such as moving chairs, placing scenery, or otherwise preparing for dramatic or other entertainments in the hall, is accepted as an equivalent. The process of retribution or reform is very simple. Any student whose neighbors prove troublesome may enter a complaint in writing to the president of the association, always a senior, and due warning is given by this officer to the offending parties. A second admonition is rarely necessary; but in extreme cases the offender may be summoned before the committee, or by vote of any seven of its members may be temporarily suspended from the association for the semester, and notice of

this action is given to the faculty. But the Vassar constituency is a rarely fine, honorable body, and its spirit is against willful violation of the rules which obtain in all well-ordered, refined communities.

The effectiveness of Vassar's social education is best attested by the great body of its alumni. From its earliest years a prominent feature of its administration has been the cultivation of social graces, not by formal enactments, but by the daily influence of the entire household. The student whose home life has been devoid of social opportunities finds herself surrounded by the refinements of a sphere in which she soon learns to move with grace. Several formal functions occur during the year, notably a dinner given by the lady principal; also the general receptions on the Philaethean anniversary and on Founder's Day, when the college halls are merry with dancing and song, the Vassar girl is out in her very best gown, and unlimited tea and ices are served. The opening of the seniors' parlor, which is newly furnished each year by the incoming senior class, and before whose draped doorway shines out, just now, a brilliant '96, in gas jets, is another grand occasion, and everyone looks forward with delight to the four "hall plays" of the Philaethean, given under distinguished auspices in the hall of the gymnasium.

The ordinary week-days are full of serious work. There is the Strong department of science under able leadership. The biological laboratory, with its microscopes and scalpels, its dissecting instruments, incubator, paraffine baths, and aquaria, its charts and fine collections; and its excellent library is filled with enthusiastic students, any one of whom can give the visitor a clear, interesting explanation of her investigations, and with her colored pencil sketch the anatomy of clam or tadpole with perfect ease.

The Vassar Brothers' Laboratory of Chemistry and



A TEACHER'S PARLOR.



STRONG HALL.

Physics is a generous building, with qualitative and quantitative laboratories fully equipped for individual work; while at the astronomical observatory, made famous by the achievements of the late Miss Maria Mitchell, one of her trained pupils assists the students to work out celestial problems.

By a new requirement in the departments of music and art, the standard of excellence in these branches has been materially raised. Until recently, special students have been admitted to the departments without passing all of the ordinary entrance-examination; but, believing that excellence in any study can best be attained by well-disciplined minds, Vassar now requires all art and music students to take the entrance-examinations, and the result has been most favorable in the music hall and studios.

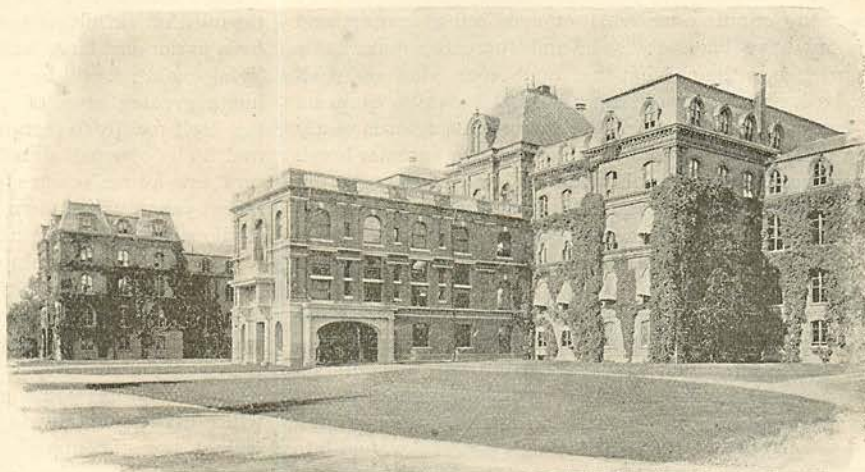
All Vassar girls are fond of the well-equipped gymnasium, but for out-of-door amusements perhaps their first choice is for a fine long tramp over the hills, rowing or skating on the neat little lake close by, or a game on the tennis court. "We like to be country girls and wear cotton dresses and go without our hats," said one fresh-faced, healthy student; and the statistics of the woman physician in the infirmary on the top floor, which is a complete little gem of an infirmary, bear witness to the Vassar girls' wise choice of recreative amusements. Increasing interest in athletics has been manifested the past year. Basket and bottle ball teams have been formed, and as the college is situated far away from the town, and the tennis and ball grounds are in the shelter of the Plaisance, the students are encouraged to this sort of exercise and allowed to count it as time spent in the gymnasium.

Even the casual visitor learns to respect the work of the Vassar student. Her day begins early. She breakfasts at half-past seven, puts her room in order, and at half-past eight is ready for the first recitation hour. With analytical geometry or calculus, Aristophanes, French conversation or Sanskrit, psychology, theory of art, study of harmony, or analytical lectures in music, laboratory work or

botanizing, each one is busy, and finds her course so well chosen that while she has no leisure hours hanging heavily on her hands, yet she is not overworked or forced by too rigid requirements to the point of nervous exhaustion.

On Friday evening, with the consciousness of duty well done, the Vassar girl dons a prettier gown than usual, and takes a longer spin than usual in room J, which serves as a dancing-hall, or arranges a special "spread" in her little parlor for her special friends. Or perhaps there is a class-meeting or some special function of one of the numerous big or little clubs without which no girls' college is quite complete. Of course there is a Shakespeare Club and a Dickens Club, also a Faust Club, an art, music, and a tennis club. The Young Women's Christian Association conducts weekly prayer-meetings in the chapel and has a branch club for special missionary work.

The Floral Club is an old and highly respectable society of Vassar life. A small fee secures to each member the entire control of a generous plot of ground, which she may cause to bloom with flowers of her own choosing. At the end of her course these plants revert to the general beds, from which any member of the society may gather flowers. The beds are arranged around the beautiful evergreen-enclosed Plaisance which is devoted to tennis courts, and this favored section of the grounds is bright with flowers and pretty girls on all pleasant summer days. The Eleanor Conservatory, a memorial gift to the college, also contains many treasures for the flower-lover.



THE MAIN BUILDING.

But the great clubs are undoubtedly the old Philaetha, or "Phil," with its three chapters,—Alpha, whose color is red, Beta, white, and Omega, blue; the "T and M," a debating society modeled after the House of Commons; and the Qui Vive. The Thekla is an enterprising musical society, and each class has its own glee club. The Current Topics Club posts a daily bulletin of the news of the world outside of Vassar, very helpful to busy students. The New England Club had last year thirty-four members from Massachusetts, and twenty-five from Connecticut; while the Grand-daughters of Vassar is composed of noble representatives of their student ancestors. Two new clubs have been formed the past year. One is composed of Greek students and is happily named the Hellenic Society; while the other has for its object the

discussion of topics of general interest, and is called the Civitas.

If the Vassar girl is not born a scribbler she certainly is inspired to write when she becomes a student. The "Vassar Miscellany" is a notable, well-edited college journal, containing matter which would be called excellent by any just critic. Dramatic writing is much affected by the Vassar student. As trigonometry has been dropped down to the freshman year, the time-honored "Trig" ceremonies are no longer observed. In their place the sophomores substitute an original play, written and presented by members of the class.

It is gratifying to know that the number of students in this peculiarly symmetrical college for girls is every year increasing. This year the enrollment is five hundred and forty-two, of which one hundred and nineteen students are in the senior class. With these numbers the halls are more than well filled, and the trustees have found it necessary to provide additional dormitory space. They have leased a large house, formerly occupied as a school, one mile from the college, and here seventy students find a home. It is hoped that at no distant day a fine new dormitory may be erected on the grounds.

HELEN MARSHALL NORTH.

## HOME ART AND HOME COMFORT



### FURNISHING THE SUMMER HOME.

THE summer home is coming to occupy a most important place in the plans of a rapidly increasing army of families, for thoughtful people are waking to the immense influence this annual flitting has upon the general health. It is very widely recognized, now, that, not alone for the children, but also for the grown people, are freedom from town restraints and the advantages of an out-of-doors life of enormous value.

In the discussions of plans for these summer outings very many cunning methods of combining comfort and economy have been devised; and there is a remarkable concurrence in the opinion that one's own vine and roof-tree, be it nothing more than a modest log-cabin camp on the banks of a lake or in the mountains, affords vastly more comfort than any boarding-house or summer hotel. Experience has proved, also, that in some of the most delightful places, the quietest and most restful, it costs no more to rent a house for a whole season than to stay for a week or two at the huge caravansaries where gregarious humanity herds.

Naturally, woman's part in the making of these summer plans is a most important one, from their first inception to the success with which they are carried out. The happiness of the family depends upon the skill, ingenuity, and wise forethought of the home-maker, who, with her hand on the tiller, guides the craft through peaceful waters into havens of rest and delight; but if she be unfit for the trust she is carried by every unfavorable current into whirlpools of contention, unwise expenditure, and the embarrassment of inability to provide for needs. With the cunning born of a true appreciation of what she herself needs, as well as all her flock, the sensible woman will establish two beacon-lights by which to be guided: the choice of a house, cabin, abandoned farm, or tent, in a healthful locality where there is plenty of air and sunshine and pure water; and such a selection of furnishings for it as shall insure the utmost comfort with the least care and expense.

It is quite possible to have everything daintily bright and attractive, and even luxuriously comfortable, without employing any of the delicate and perishable things which add so much to a housekeeper's cares, and without great expense. The simpler the summer home is and all its

arrangements, the easier it will be to run it with little labor, and the more time there will be for rest and the enjoyment of out-of-doors life. The change from town to country life should bring to every member of the family, and especially to the mother, as much freedom from care and as complete change from the daily routine as possible.

The hall in the summer home should be next in its inviting appearance to the broad piazza, which is in reality the most important part of the house. If there is not room for a parlor and large hall, combine the two in one as the living-room; it will be found much more enjoyable, giving a greater sense of spaciousness, better air, and lending itself readily to picturesque effects in furnishing. The multitude of small details, collections of various sorts, rare bric-à-brac, choice porcelains, etc., which have in recent years turned town houses into museums, should be studiously avoided; for not only is it a weariness to the flesh to take care of these things, but it is actually a strain upon mind and eyes to be confronted at every turn with a multiplicity of objects. Therefore a wise restraint should be exercised in the selection of everything of a purely decorative character. Every piece of furniture should be for use and comfort; you want no stiff, spindle-legged chairs, which invite one only to perch lest they fall beneath one's weight, nor stiff, upholstered chairs and *tête-à-têtes* which proclaim their ceremonious purpose.

The great, roomy hall should invite to restful ease, and there should be couches, divans, and lounging-chairs, with plenty of soft cushions wherever they can be placed, as well as low willow chairs by work and tea tables. If there can be but one open grate in the house let it be, by all means, in the hall, where a cheery fire on cool evenings and mornings will be most enjoyed, and whence the genial warmth will most easily pervade the whole house and dispel its dampness.

If the floors can be painted that is the next choice to a hardwood finish; but if neither of these is available it costs but a trifle to cover all the floors in a house with neat matting, and it can now be had in attractive patterns and colors which harmonize with any scheme of decoration. The walls can be kalsomined, painted, or papered, or

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