



OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS.

## GIRL-LIFE IN THE BLACK FOREST.

in their midst; and thus it is in the Black Forest, otherwise it would be impossible to account for the peculiar characteristics of the people.

A slight sketch of the district may not be unacceptable to those girls who are unable to travel so far, especially as very little has been written upon it, and a great part of the primitive, half-hidden nooks which are so beautiful and so characteristic remain as yet unknown even to those who are able to travel.

This wonderful country—so rich in traditional lore, the especial home of gnomes and sprites, the mountains so thickly clothed with forests, the valleys so exquisitely beautiful in form and verdure, the birthplace of the Danube and many another river—this wonderful country is guarded by three great Protestant strongholds: Constance, Basle, and Strasburg. If you draw a line from one to the other, you will inclose an area of about twelve hundred square miles, and this is the Black Forest. The two owners of this country are Baden and Wurtemberg: by far the larger portion, which is Roman Catholic, belonging to the former; the remainder, which is Protestant, being the property of the latter.

There are but few towns in the whole area,

and to one or two of the least known I hope to introduce you.

As one moves about from place to place, it is easy to perceive that the inhabitants are not all of the same race, for they differ in features, characteristics, and dialect; those who live in the north are of Rhenish extraction, those in the west are Suevians, and those in the south are called Alemanni. These last are very ingenious and inventive.

Having given you this slight sketch, let us look at the girls, for it is in them we are chiefly interested; but before doing this, let me introduce you to our little party. We call ourselves "special correspondents" of THE GIRL'S OWN. We are in a little room in the midst of the Forest, scrupulously clean but bare of carpet or any other luxury. I must confess that it is not even what is known as a sitting-room, but is the largest of our bedrooms, and lighted by a very shaky, strong-smelling lamp. Two of us are writing; the other two are finishing their sketches. I am the worst off, for lively discussions are going on as to the merits of cross-hatching and tinting. We do not look elegant: but special correspondents never do.

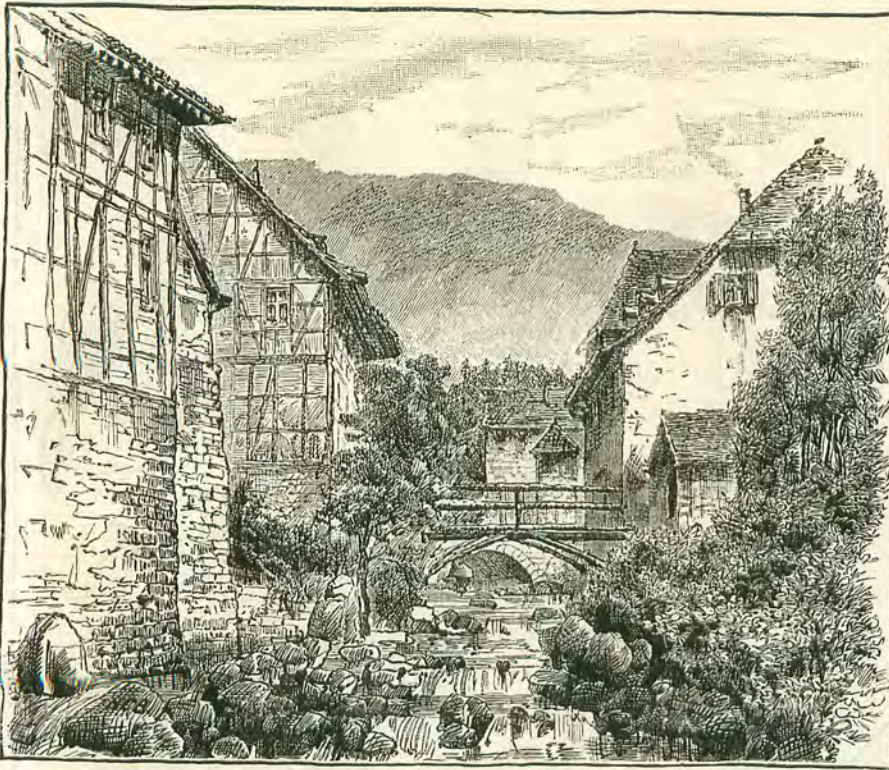
The girls and women have a peculiarly gentle and subdued expression, induced, as I think, by the sombre grandeur of the country in which they live; their manners are modest and restful, and, no matter

(SCHWARZWALD.)

"Wem ist der Schwarzwald unbekannt  
Mit seinen stolzen Tannen?  
Kein wand'rer kommt in unser Land,  
Und keiner geht von dannen,  
Der nicht bei seiner höhren Pracht  
Still steht und grosse Augen macht."

HAVING already written of girl-life in Germany, it may seem superfluous that girl-life in the Black Forest should receive special notice; and yet you have only to come and dwell among the people to see that life here is as different from the rest of the world as is the Black Forest itself.

It is an undoubted fact that the place in which we are born and brought up shapes, in a great measure, our lives, our occupations, our amusements, and gives a tone to our character and disposition. Mountain, valley, town, all mark those who are born



A LEAF FROM ONE OF THE SKETCH BOOKS.

whether you find them at house-work or field-work, in the schools or in the factories, there is a quiet reticence and dignity about them very striking. They are not in the least frivolous, but they are inquisitive, and, I should say, obstinate. Their dress is not picturesque, yet one would be sorry to see it superseded by that of modern fashion. The old women, who still adhere to the high straw hat, thick bunchy petticoats, and short body, are not unlike the Welsh women; the caps, with the gold and silver embroidered backs and the long ribbon strings down to the ground, worn by the majority of the women and girls, are very quaint, but a girl need be very good-looking to carry off the effect. These caps are of black silk and cost about fourteen shillings each. As a rule, the girls are very good-looking; they have dark eyes and good complexion, and an open, restful countenance. Wherever and whenever you meet them, they have a greeting for you expressive of sympathy and interest in your actions. It is either, "God be with you," "I wish you a safe and pleasant journey," "A pleasant walk," "A good appetite," "A good night's rest,"—which takes away any sense of loneliness a stranger might feel.

Every girl is well educated throughout the Forest. In each parish there is a good school for boys and girls (mixed schools); the instruction is gratis, the State or the Community being answerable for expenses. School and church go hand-in-hand for religious training. On Sunday afternoons there is a service in church called Christian instruction, which

boys and girls are bound to attend until they are eighteen years old. Should the girls desire to continue their education after the compulsory seven years, there are good high schools at which they can learn foreign languages, drawing, and modelling, and for which each

person pays fifty shillings a year. I expect, of course, the Duchess of Baden's school for the higher education of women and girls, which is gratis.

Education is greatly valued by the girls; it is no unusual thing for them to walk three miles and upwards twice a day to and from school, and to be in their places at eight o'clock in the morning, and this in all weathers. Those who come above two miles and a half are excused attendance in the afternoon; this is necessary in the winter, to ensure their return home in safety.

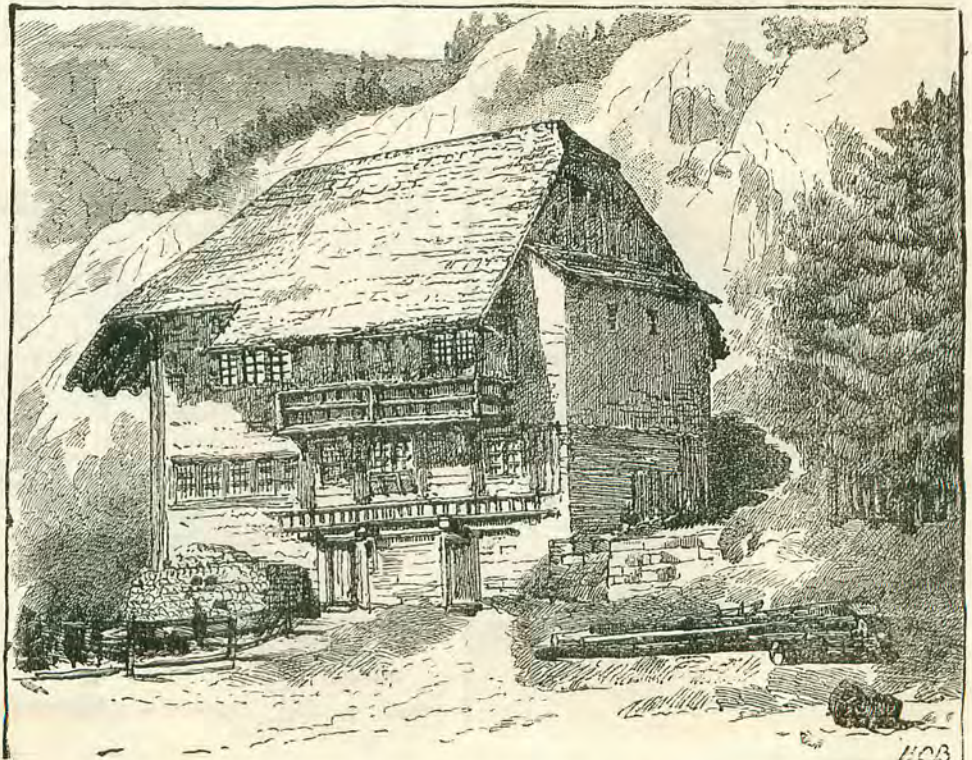
The lessons are changed each hour, and are all given by masters except needle-work, embroidery, knitting, and straw-plaiting, which are taught by women.

We have been amazed, on entering a cottage or farmhouse far from town or village, to hear ourselves addressed in perfectly good English, and on inquiring how it had been learnt we found that the groundwork had been gained in the schools, and that it had been perfected by conversation with the fathers and brothers who had been to England and America with Black Forest clocks—that they always returned after two or three years' absence and kept up the practice of speaking English with their families while at home.

In like manner we found people speaking Italian and Russian, and not only so, but greatly interested in the life and laws of the various countries in which they had sojourned.

A feature of girl-life here is the straw-plaiting, which is scarcely ever out of the hand. Little children of three or four years old move their chubby fingers so rapidly that the eye can scarce follow them.

The history of the straw-plaiting is interesting. In 1694 some glassworkers brought into Triberg, a town of the Black Forest, a straw hat from Switzerland. The inhabitants, who were very poor at that time, looked at it until



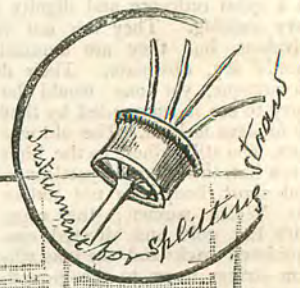
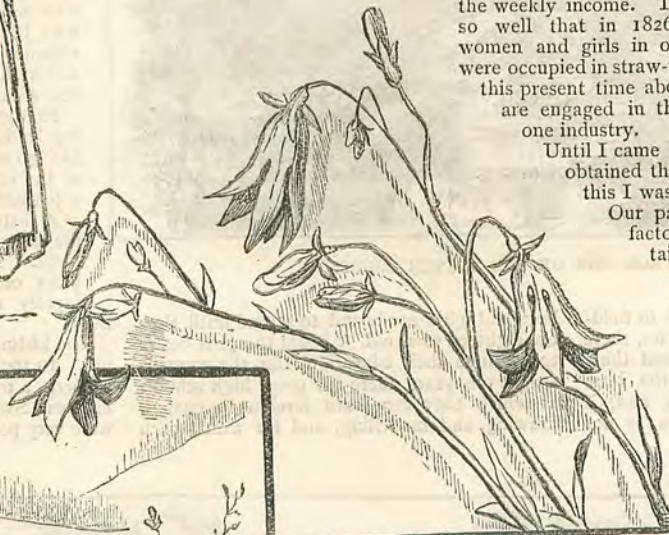
A HOUSE IN THE BLACK FOREST.



they thought it possible to imitate it, and thus create a new industry for themselves, by which the women and girls could add a little to the weekly income. They succeeded so well that in 1826 above 1,500 women and girls in one little town were occupied in straw-plaiting, and at this present time above 6,000 girls are engaged in the Black Forest upon this one industry.

Until I came here I thought the women obtained the straw from Italy; but in this I was wrong, as you shall hear.

Our party had been looking over factories in Triberg (three mountains) all the forenoon, and after dinner had wandered about over the



SAC

hills surrounding the town until we were tired, dusty, and thirsty, and we looked about us to see if we could get some milk. At length we spied an old-fashioned house, and a woman in front digging the garden. We asked where we could get a little milk. "Here," was the answer, given with a pleasant smile. We followed her round to the back, and sat ourselves on a wooden bench, near an old pump, with the forest-covered hills about us, and a laughing brook making its way down the valley.

To each of us was brought a large glass of new milk, and while we were drinking it we saw a quaint little maiden shyly watching us, with a bundle of straws at her side, and moving her fingers rapidly at a twelve-straw plait.

We at once called her to us, and one of our party made a rapid sketch of her while I asked the mother something of the history of straw plaiting.

From her I learned that she and her daughters prepared the ground on the mountain side, which she pointed out to me, that they sowed the rye, tended it, and at proper time reaped it. I said, "You use, then, the ear for bread and the stalks for plaiting?"

"Not so," was the answer; "it will not serve two purposes. If we left the corn standing until the ear was ripe, it would no longer do for the straw work. It must be cut directly the ear begins to form, in order to get the straw sufficiently fine for plaiting. It is then laid in the field for three weeks to bleach, and if it is not then light enough in colour, we put it into a wooden case over sulphur, and this burns the green out of it. The straw is cut at the knots to avoid unevenness in the plait. We women and girls," she said, "grow the rye, cut it, bleach it, and finally weave it; and what we do, most of the families in the Black Forest do also."

On putting another question I found that a girl utilising every moment of her spare time could not plait more than thirty yards a day, and that the payment for sixty yards of coarse plait was twopence-halfpenny, and for the same number of yards of fine straw plait threepence-halfpenny. As three shillings is the price given for a little simple straw hat, the gain is great somewhere.

To finish this subject before proceeding to another, I will say that we desired to see the straw-plaiting taught in class at one of the great schools, and this we did at Fürtwangen. We stayed a long time there watching the lesson given; it was most interesting to us. By means of a clever little instrument a straw may be brought back to its proper shape if flattened, or it may be split into four, six, or eight parts to render it fine enough for making trimming for dresses. You can scarcely think how beautiful this plaited trimming is in colour and texture; it looks like very fine cream-coloured lace. It was in this same little town of Fürtwangen we came across the likeness of the first teacher of straw-plaiting in schools. You will see it in No. 2 of the sketches of head-dresses; this will also show you the common head-dress worn by the women, which are made either of plain white or gilded straw. The whole of the figures on this side, except No. 2, are the likenesses of living people who were delighted that S. R. C. should sketch them.

The amusements of the girls are of the very simplest character, and consist of walking and singing after church on Sundays during the summer months, and paying visits to friends in winter who live at a distance, the means of conveyance being a sledge. On the week-

day evenings in winter the girls and women may be seen with lanterns in one hand and the distaff or the straw-plait in the other, going to each other's houses for a couple of hours. Here they work diligently with their fingers: for you must know that in all the country places the table, bed, and body linen are home-spun, while the relating of tales and legends, or singing part-songs, occupies them pleasantly until the time comes to return home, which is always a very early hour. The lanterns on the return journey, I need hardly say, are transferred to the hands of sweet-hearts, who are always in readiness to see the girls safe home.

Added to these simple amusements there is an occasional taking part in the processions on festivals, one of which I will tell you of.

You must know that a strong feature of those living in the Black Forest is the love and reverence they have for religion. At the same time there is a good deal of superstition



THE PILGRIMAGE CHURCH.

mixed up with it; but, as you will see, there is much of truth and beauty lying at the base even of the superstition. In the little town of Triberg (our first resting-place in the Black Forest) the parish church, built upon a rock a hundred and fifty feet high, is known by the name of the Wohlfahrt Kapelle, or Pilgrimage Church. On walking up to it for the first time, H. C. B. went into raptures over the tower, while we three were greatly attracted by an old clergyman who stood at the door watching us with a half-startled expression, like one who lives much alone. To him I went and asked if we might see inside the church. He not only assented, but went in with us, and explained with great patience all about the founding and building of the church, and why we found people decorating it with flowers and trees—which latter stood the whole way down either side of the middle aisle.

You will see in the sketch that a gallery joins the parsonage to the church, and the

dearest little woman in the quaintest of dresses is the superintendent of it. She came to us, seeing that we were strangers, to tell us that the morrow was a great festival throughout the Black Forest—that it was a day on which the people met to give special thanks to God for His mercies, and was called the "good God's day." She said the service would be a very interesting one, and that if we would like to be present she would see that we had seats, and that if we would favour her by taking early coffee with her she would be very pleased. We accepted her kindness, and as we walked home to our hotel we noticed very many white dresses carried open in the arms of dressmakers or laundresses all ready for the girls to wear on the morrow.

At five o'clock the next morning the little town of 1,500 inhabitants was astir, the guns firing and brass bands playing hymns. At seven we found ourselves moving with the throng to the parish church. From over the hills, from the valleys below, and by the forest footpaths came groups of men, women, and children—the women in their quaint headdresses and bunchy petticoats, the girls in white, and bareheaded—all with earnest, reverent manner, making their way to the church door. Here they separated—the elders going into the church and taking their seats, the girls falling into rank according to size, the tiny ones leading the way up to the chancel. A more impressive or prettier sight I never saw than the crowded church, the quaint costumes, the children in their white dresses fronting the dark pines up the aisle. The manner of all during the service was very devout—no smiling, no looking about; but young and old seemed to be pouring out their hearts in thanksgiving to the Giver of all good gifts.

At the close of the service all assembled outside the church four abreast, preceded by three or four brass bands—first the music, next the singers, then the girls in white, then the clergy, then the remainder of the congregation. All being arranged, quickly and with perfect quiet, the procession began slowly to wind down the hill singing hymns in parts as they went. On through the town they moved, pausing here and there to offer a thanksgiving on the way, that the old, the sick, and infirm, who could not get to the church, might yet be able to join in praise to their God. This very much impressed us—it was so real. The whole was over by mid-day—no drinking, dancing, or noise in the afterpart of the day. Most of the

girls went to their straw-plaiting, spinning, or field work, as on other days. I have given you this little experience of ours because it is one of the few things which varies the routine of a girl's life in the Black Forest.

Triberg has but one long street, and the sketch we give you here is one of the turnings out of it. I should so like to give you the history of this parish church as I heard it from the white-haired old clergyman, as it will explain something of the superstitious element in the people. Formerly, on the site where now the church stands, high pines raised their heads, intercepted by a beautiful mountain torrent which still runs fresh and cool behind the church, and by which we had sat and talked with the woman about the straw. It seems that it was the practice of some soldiers stationed at Schönach (about three miles distant) to take the narrow path through the pines when returning at night from the little town of Triberg to their quarters, and that as they came near to the rushing torrent they

frequently heard sweet music in the souging of the pine trees, and firmly believed it to be the voices of angels. We who live in these days can give an explanation, viz, that a cleft in the rock which gave an opposing impulse to the wind passing round it, together with the souging of the pine trees, made a natural Æolian harp, the effect being increased by the sound of the torrent. Even now, on a windy night near the same spot, like causes produce the same effect.

However, the superstition which lay deep down in the hearts of the people induced a feeling of awe, and the soldiers believed that that which they heard was supernatural. To add to this, they found one day affixed to one of the highest and finest pine-trees by which the brook passed a figure of the Virgin and Child cut out in lime-wood. It was known subsequently who had carved and affixed this figure (1680), but the soldiers, who in the sound of the Æolian harp heard the singing of angels, believed the appearance of this figure to be miraculous, and made for it a tin covering to protect it.

This spot became the resort of pilgrims, and the gifts and offerings of the people were soon sufficient to allow a wooden church to be built round the pine, and became known henceforth as the "Wohlfahrt Kapelle." It was subsequently consecrated by the bishop, and became more and more the resort of pilgrims; so that with the multiplied offerings they were able to begin the present building in 1693, and in 1697 the first service was held, although the church was not completely finished until 1709. The old man who told us all this said he had lived there as pastor for fifty years, and he knew and loved every stone in the building, and every man, woman, and child of his flock.

There is no sharp division between class and class in the Black Forest. The rich people live much in the same style as the poor. Or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say there is no extreme of position, neither very rich nor very poor. All girls are brought up from their earliest years in habits of industry; there is neither time nor opportunity afforded them for what is called whiling

away the time. The houses are generally in the style which we have sketched for you here, with deep projecting roof and quaint wooden galleries, the whole being built of wood shingle.

The cattle are housed in the lower part behind, and the family occupy the remaining portion. No woman thinks herself above house-cleaning, cooking, and laundry-work, and the girls are brought up to do the same. A good deal of the lighter work in the factories, such as polishing the cases and painting the faces of the clocks, is done by girls of the poorer class, for which they obtain a shilling or fifteenpence a day. Very few girls in the part of the Black Forest belonging to Baden go out to service, for there are very few absolutely poor, and there is plenty for them to do at home. This you will see in a moment when I tell you that the farms (the largest about twenty-five acres) are mostly worked by the women and girls. In the summer they are in the fields working and attending to the cattle, for the men are otherwise employed; in the winter they spin and plait. And thus the years roll on. Here and there one sees a machine making its way into the farms, but this is very rare, as the people do not like them. I asked the women why they objected to machines, which would evidently advantage them so greatly. Their answer took me aback. It was this:

"We like the blessing of God upon our farms, and as we throw in our handfuls of seed into the ground it is our practice to say or to pray—

'I sow the seed,  
God give it speed,  
For me and those in need.'

How can we say this over those ugly iron things?"

The girls living in the Wurtemberg part of the Black Forest sometimes go out to service and bear a very high character; they may be met with specially as nurses and cooks in all parts of the world.

The work of the girls must necessarily vary according to the part of the Black Forest in which they live. In one part wood cutting

and raft-floating is the principal occupation; in another, charcoal burning; in another, glass-blowing; in another, weather-houses form the principal industry, or wood carving, or pottery, or clock making, or organ building; but wherever their home is, the daily routine is work, indoor and out. There is little or no excessive drinking in the Black Forest. It is true the men meet, as a rule, in the village inn, if there be one, but it is more to smoke and talk than to drink. We have had to pass through these rooms often to get our supper, and as a rule there is a large map and a case of books in these smoking-rooms, and we have frequently seen the men tracing their own travels or following the route of their comrades who are out in the world selling Black Forest clocks; and once, in passing through, we heard the host of one of these little inns reading, in good English, aloud to half a dozen men with pipes in their mouths, an article out of the GIRL'S OWN, and a request was made to me that I would sometimes send a number out to them.

There is nothing coarse in the manners and habits of the people of the Black Forest; they are a very independent race, and value much more the good opinion of their own immediate circle than of any formed of them at a distance. I should like you to notice on the sketch of head-dresses, No. I., which every girl is expected to wear on her marriage day; it is most curious, and made of the most tawdry materials, such as showy buttons, bits of glass, ends of bright ribbons. I cannot learn the history of it. If it were not for this, her dress on the occasion would be pretty. The ceremony of marriage in the Black Forest is quiet and homely; the clergyman, who knows all his flock, takes a special interest in the young people, and never omits to give them a kind, fatherly address in addition to his blessing.

A thing which strikes me very vividly is that here in the Black Forest the girls, who have none of our amusements or excitements, and none of our leisure, are happier, more restful, and more amiable than many a girl among us who has every luxury and nothing to do.

## THE OBLIGATIONS OF SCHOOL LIFE.



As a general rule, we should not expect school life to be as enjoyable as that of home, while usually offering much to compensate the young student for her temporary absence from its peculiar privileges, and the society of those most dear to her.

Yet schooldays are sometimes fraught with

many joyous memories in after life, pleasant to recall when the less sunny days of advancing autumn, or the winter of age, follow in their due course.

The retrospect must be varied in its aspect according to the circumstances attendant on the springtime of life in each individual case; the special happiness of the home, lost for the time; the health, and the particular disposition of the young student, whether bright and sociable, and a need of companionship experienced; or shy, sensitive, and reserved, and likely to suffer from any exchange of intimate relationships for the uncongenial association with strangers. If the youthful schoolgirl be unhappy, let her take an honest view of her case, that she may not lay the blame of this premature "winter of her discontent" on the wrong shoulders. If these young days be "dark and dreary," let me offer my aid to trace out the cause.

Apart from the advantages that accrue from the solicitude of a motherly lady principal, or the results arising from the carelessness or undue severity of one wholly unqualified for her position; apart from the personal *agrément*s provided in the matter of food, accommodation, and domestic service, or the "do the boys" character of the system adopted;

apart from the description of teachers and companions, amongst whom for a time the scholar's lot is cast, very much of the happiness to which I allude depends upon herself.

But what are the essential characteristics, the possession of which will promote its enjoyments? What should the young student do, or refrain from doing, which may ensure to her those advantages which school life affords, and mitigate the inconveniences which are scarcely separable from it?

The chief characteristics, active and passive, are five in number, *i. e.*, (1) an honest endeavour to compensate her parents for the expenses undertaken for her benefit; (2) sweetness of temper under petty provocations; (3) unselfishness towards her companions; (4) the never-forgotten maintenance of self-respect; (5) a quick-sighted tact regulating her words and actions with reference to all around her—teachers, schoolmates, and servants. Let a careful regard to these points mark her special individuality amongst her fellows; for, believe me, dear young sisters, the secret of securing a reasonable degree of happiness in your position as a schoolgirl, and of the ultimate advantages school life might afford, depends on the exhibition of these qualifications.