

Girton and Newnham Colleges.

BY E. A. BRAVLEY HODGETTS.



From a Photo. by

GIRTON COLLEGE.

[Stearn, Cambridge.]

HOW often do we not hear the expression, "Sweet girl graduates!" Would you be surprised to know that they do not exist at Cambridge? I do not mean to say that the adjective is misapplied: that would be both ungallant and untruthful. All I postulate is that the designation is inaccurate. The University of Cambridge does not confer degrees on ladies. This is why ladies have to work much harder while at college than men, for unless they go in for honours they have wasted their time. There is no degree examination for them. Consequently, the young ladies at Girton and Newnham are not called undergraduates, but students, and they do not wear cap and gown, for they can never hope to win the hood of the M.A. or B.A.—from Cambridge, at least. The University of London, for one, is more liberal in this respect. But I am informed that the certificated students are almost unanimous in feeling it to be a hardship that their work should not receive the same recognition as that of members of the University.

Of the two colleges devoted to the higher

education of women at Cambridge, Girton is the more expensive: hence the students are more wealthy; some of them keep their horses, even. I have not heard of the Girton or the Newnham boat, though that, no doubt, will come in time, for—and it is with pleasure that I write it—the lady students are athletic. They work hard, and, fortunately, they likewise play hard. The consequence is that they are all remarkably healthy-looking young women, with clear, transparent complexions, forms erect, and a graceful carriage. It is quite a mistake to suppose that blue spectacles, cropped hair, and round shoulders predominate among them: on the contrary, they are conspicuous by their absence.

Another popular delusion is that Girton and Newnham girls are mannish blue-stockings, unfeminine in appearance, harsh and awkward in manner, rude and self-sufficient, contemptuous towards the opposite sex—in short, female prigs. Nothing can be more misleading. Those whom I have seen, and I have seen very many, have been invariably gentle and diffident, graceful and courteous, and thoroughly girlish and ladylike. The reason is obvious: The more people know,

the more conscious they are of their own shortcomings; the more real they are, the less pretentious they become. It is so with men, and it is certainly so with women.

Neither at Girton nor at Newnham do they smoke or even play billiards. They are simple, unaffected girls. They play at lawn tennis, golf, hockey, and fives, with the ardour of schoolgirls, and devoid of all self-consciousness. They are, for the most part, elegantly dressed, though always simply. They have not come to college for amusement, to swagger, and make friends, but to work, in some cases to obtain a means of earning a livelihood.

Let us see what becomes of them after they have left college. Looking through the printed lists of former students, we find that they obtain positions as school-mistresses principally. They are scattered about the world. Some are in Canada, some in Australia and New Zealand, some in South Africa, others in India. The large provincial schools have secured the services of many. Occasionally we find some at the observatories, Greenwich, for instance; and still a few are able to continue their life of study and even to contribute to the stores of universal knowledge by original research.

The "Philosophical Transactions" of the Royal Society and other scientific publications contain many papers to-day from the pens of former Newnham and Girton girls. Wherever they go they bring with them that refinement and humanizing influence which is the peculiar attribute of the student. Some of them marry, and marry brilliantly, like Miss Ramsey, who is now the wife of Dr. Butler, of Trinity. But they are all workers, and not butterflies.

Girton College is a handsome red brick building, some three miles out of Cambridge. It is situated on the crest of a slight elevation

overlooking a vale of corn and meadow land, bounded by Madingley Rise, with its windmill beacon and associations with Hereward and Charles Kingsley, and stretching away under a vast expanse of sky to Godmanchester and Huntingdon on the north-west.

It was built in 1873, and among its benefactors the names of Lady Stanley of Alderley and of Miss Davies (the sister of Llewelyn Davies), the virtual founder, stand out prominently. Its central feature is a handsome tower, under which is an archway and the main entrance. The visitor is received in a spacious vestibule by a neat maid-servant, in



From a Photo. by] STUDY FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY MISS RAMSEY—GIRTON. [Stearn, Cambridge.

cap and apron, for Girton is something of a convent, and during my visit I beheld only one male person, and that was a curate. The ground floor is devoted to the reading-room, in which is a collection of old Italian Folk Songs, copied out and illustrated by Miss Alexander, and presented to the college by Professor Ruskin; the library, which boasts 6,000 volumes, principally works of reference; the dining-room, or hall; lecture-rooms, etc. But I will let Miss E. Dixon describe the buildings; she was formerly herself a student of Girton, and is intimately acquainted with its routine and structure:—

"The buildings are in three stories, known as the Top, Middle, and Bottom Corridors

respectively. On the two lower corridors, and in some parts of the topmost, each student has two rooms, furnished by the college with all that is absolutely essential in the way of furniture (students add to this whatever they please in the way of pictures, etc.), and communicating by folding doors. On the top corridor many of the rooms are single, but more picturesque in shape, and divided into two portions by a heavy curtain.

“Of these little sets of students’ chambers there are in all a hundred and five, most of which have been very tastefully arranged by the students, besides the rooms for the Mistress, Vice-Mistress and librarian, six resident lecturers, bursar, and an entire wing for the housekeeper and the kitchen staff. On the bottom corridor are thirteen lecture-rooms, library, laboratory, hall, and reading-room. The corridors are connected by four staircases, besides that in the servants’ wing.

“The Hall is a fine large room, which has been enlarged to almost double its former size within recent years. It contains several tables, four long ones for students, the ‘High’ table at the end for the Mistress and resident lecturers, and a small round one in a deep bay window which is sometimes used as a guest-table by students who have visitors. All the three principal meals are taken in common in Hall—breakfast between 8.15 and 9, lunch between 12 and 3, and

‘Hall’ or dinner—the only formal meal, where all sit down at once—at 6.30.

“Afternoon tea is carried round by the college servants at four o’clock to students’ rooms and lecture-rooms. This last item is especially appreciated by out-college lecturers of the masculine gender, who give most of their lectures and general tuition at Girton during the afternoon, and are not accustomed to the luxury of having ready-made tea brought to them in the middle of a long lecture in their own colleges, any more than they are accustomed *chez eux* to lecture-rooms with tablecloths.

“Students at Girton have to pass the usual University examinations on or after entering upon residence. Of these the first is the Little-Go, officially termed the ‘Previous.’ It consists of elementary classics and mathematics, with, for Honours’ students, a further examination in mathematics, with French and German as alternatives at choice. The Little-Go once disposed of—as soon as possible—the student chooses in which branch of study she will settle down to read for her Tripos three years hence: whether in Classics, Mathematics, Natural Science, Moral Science, History, Law, Theology, or in Mediæval with Modern or in Oriental Languages.

“The results of the students’ choice in the past may be somewhat surprising, and it may be added that exactly the same tendencies are at work at the present moment. It is

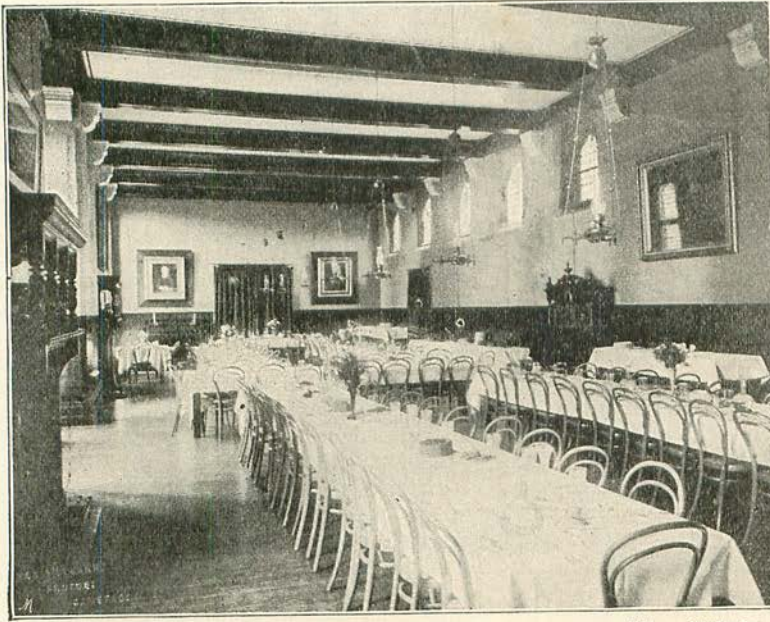
found that the subjects which are most popular are just those for which the ordinary curriculum of the average girls’ school gives the very least preparation. Classics is a good first on the list with 97 in the twenty-four years; Mathematics second with 75; then come Natural Science with 46, History with 29, Moral Science with 19, Mediæval and Modern Languages with 9, and Theology with 1. Besides these, there are a few



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THE LIBRARY—GIRTON.

[Stearn, Cambridge.



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THE HALL—GIRTON.

[Stearn, Cambridge.

students who have taken double honours, viz., two in Mathematics and Moral Science, one in Mathematics and History, one in Mathematics and Mediæval with Modern Languages, and one in Natural Science and Moral Science.

"The hours devoted by Girtonians per day to 'reading'—the common Cambridge term which includes writing and thinking and sundry other things—vary somewhat, according to the subjects they are engaged in. It is generally agreed that more than about six or six and a half hours per day at mathematics is unprofitable, while an average of eight may be put in at natural science, including, as it does, a good deal of practical work in laboratories.

"But, taking the various subjects one with another, an *average* of seven or seven and a half hours per day throughout the term is pretty hard reading, and nothing is gained by exceeding it. Of course, a large number of Cambridge undergraduates never approach anywhere near this record, but women students come to Cambridge especially to work, and only incidentally to play so far as health and the *esprit de corps* of college life demand. For it must not be supposed that Girton students are at all lacking in the healthy open-air instincts which are natural to vigorous and common-sensible young women of twenty.

"Tennis-courts abound on both sides of

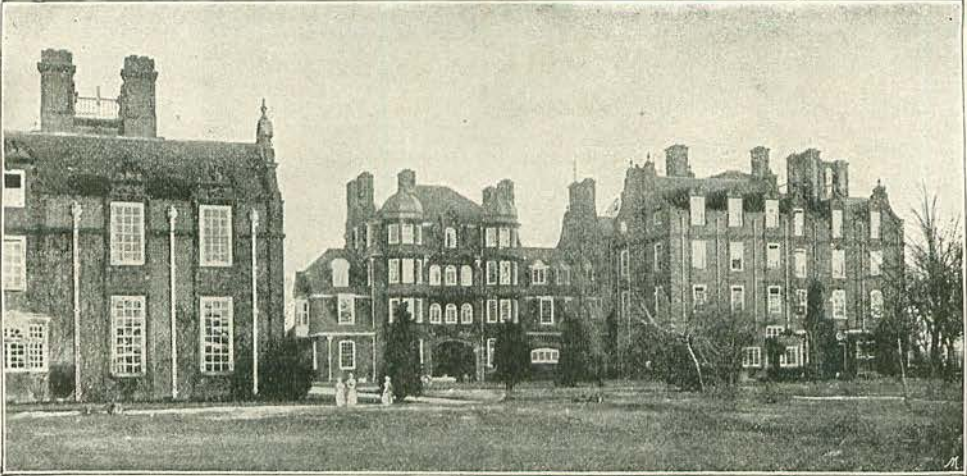
the college buildings. There is a ground for hockey and one for golf. Some students have a predilection for long walks across country in search of wild flowers or 'beasts.' Small clubs and societies—debating, musical, reading—abound. There is a fire brigade, whose officers are elected on the most democratic lines from among the students themselves (no lecturer or other college authority *ever* stands for election as officer), and

whose members are systematically drilled under strict discipline at the pumps, buckets, ladders, and ropes.

"Perhaps most enjoyable and least formal gatherings of all are the small tea, coffee, or cocoa parties to which individual students invite their friends in the evening after Hall."

These parties take the place of the "wines" to which the grosser male undergraduate is addicted. The life of the students is free and unconstrained. They go out when they like and come in when they please. Those who have to attend lectures at Cambridge itself are conveyed thither in cabs at the cost of the college. All have to be in for Hall, and they are not allowed out at night except by special permission, and then they must be in by eleven. Nor may the Girton girl go unchaperoned to dances. There is no chapel, but prayers are said in the library. Marking takes place three times a day. The handsome grounds have a sheet of ornamental water, and there is a gymnasium in the building.

The beginnings of Girton were humble, and represented by six students in a small house at Hitchin, in 1869. In those days it was almost an act of heroism to join that small band; to-day it has become the smart thing to go to Girton, and already the building, large as it is, is scarcely large enough to afford accommodation to all its students, and occasionally some have to be boarded out in the vicinity.



From a Photo. by]

NEWNHAM COLLEGE.

[Stearn, Cambridge.

The interior of Girton presents a picture of neatness, cleanliness, and order which affords a pleasing contrast to the more time-honoured colleges in the town, but then the hand of woman is known to beautify all it touches. The view from the windows is pleasing, without being wildly picturesque.

Architecturally, Newnham is a much finer building than Girton. It is composed of three halls, called respectively Clough Hall, after Miss Clough, the founder; Sidgwick Hall, after Mrs. Sidgwick, the principal; and Old Hall. With the latter is incorporated a new structure only lately completed, the Pfeiffer Building, commemorating Mrs. Pfeiffer, whose bequest defrayed the cost of its erection. These three halls are all connected and form two sides of a quadrangle, in which are inclosed the college grounds, where hockey and tennis are played.

The main entrance is through an archway in the Pfeiffer Building. The architecture is Flemish, or Queen Anne, as it is the fashion to call it, and the buildings are suggestive of comfort, dignity, and learning. They are nevertheless cheerful and bright, being in red brick, the window-frames picked out in white.

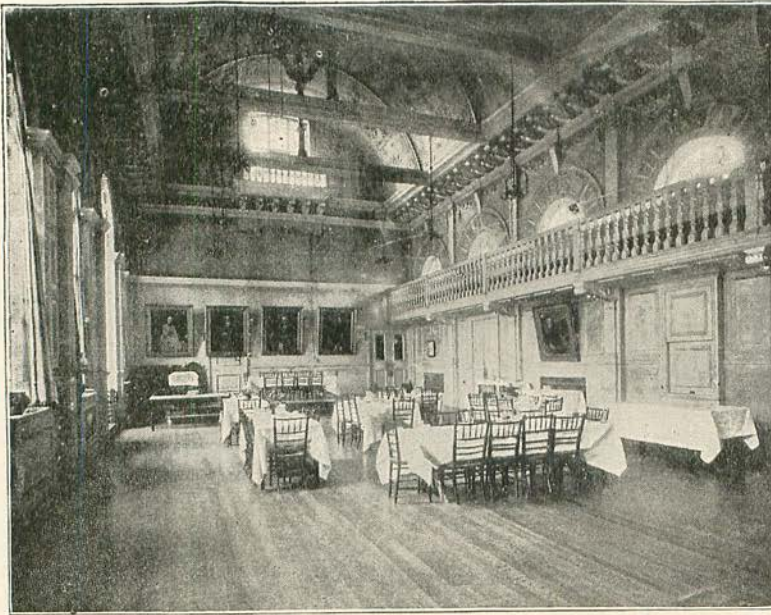
The halls are presided over by vice-principals: Miss Helen Gladstone, a daughter of the Grand Old Man; Miss Jane Lee, a daughter of Archdeacon Lee; and Miss Katharine Stephen, a daughter of the late judge of that name—Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, the wife of Professor Sidgwick, being the principal. In the hall there are portraits of this lady and her husband, and of the late principal, Miss Clough, by Mr. Shannon,

which, through the courtesy of Messrs. Gray and Davis, photographers, of Queen's Road, Bayswater, I am able to reproduce.

Newnham, like Girton, has had a slow growth, and began humbly. In 1870, lectures for women were first started in Cambridge, and in 1871, in consequence of the demand from women at a distance to share the lectures, Miss A. J. Clough took charge of a house in Cambridge, with five students; but in 1875 Old Hall was opened, and since then the growth of Newnham has been steady and rapid. The Pfeiffer Building has been lately erected at a cost of £5,000, bestowed by the trustees of the late Mrs. Pfeiffer.

Mrs. Sidgwick, the amiable and courtly lady principal, was so good as to escort me personally through the little kingdom over which she holds sway, and graciously explained to me all the points of interest. The college library, part of which was bequeathed to the college, in 1887, by Mr. Coutts Trotter, contains about 8,000 volumes. There is a magnificent laboratory, which could challenge comparison with that of Dr. Koch, in Berlin, when I saw it in 1891.

From the laboratory, Mrs. Sidgwick took me across the grounds to the handsome hall, showing me the diminutive observatory by the way. Girls were playing hockey with vigour as we passed the hockey-ground. The hall is a large and capacious building, prettily decorated, the walls and ceilings being white and ornamented with mouldings. Along one side of the hall and at one end there is a commodious gallery, and at the other end there is a raised dais, on which is the "High"



From a Photo. by]

THE HALL—NEWNHAM.

[Stearn, Cambridge.

table, and a piano. For occasionally the Newnham girls unbend and indulge in concerts. "I suppose it would be profane to suggest smoking concerts?" I asked my guide. She replied, with tranquil dignity: "It would be profane." I then learned that Newnham students did not smoke.

At Newnham students are not allowed two rooms, as at Girton, but only one, and it is pretty to see how tastefully these are furnished, though here and there I saw rooms that had all the austerity of a barrister's chambers in the Temple.

But in order to present a picture of the life at Newnham, I think I will let a student who has been so kind as to favour me with the following description speak for herself:—

"It may be as well to remark at the outset that each of the three halls among which our hundred and fifty students are distributed has its own Vice-Principal, its own dining-hall and common rooms, and to some extent its own customs, but these latter do not diverge widely enough to prevent a description of one hall from serving as a type of all three. Choosing, then, for obvious reasons my own hall, I should like to introduce you to it under one of its pleasantest aspects, and to show you a scene that always rises before me when I try to recall my first impressions of Newnham.

"Imagine one of those bright October mornings, with a touch of frost in the air, which show autumn tints at their loveliest in

'the Backs' and college gardens. It is half-past eight, and breakfast is in full swing in our pretty dining-hall. Fires burn merrily in the big fire-places, at one of which a kettle is singing; through south and east windows the cheerful sunlight falls on the 'High' and other white-covered tables gay with chrysanthemums, on creamy panelled walls and on the polished floor, the pride of our head table-maid's heart.

From each and all

of the tables comes a lively buzz of conversation, though without prejudice to the proper business of the hour.

"It is early in the term, and we are all eager either to hear or tell some new thing about our adventures during the long vacation, while the more virtuously disposed are making friendly overtures to our new arrivals, an obligation which the less conscientious consider only binding at dinner. I confess, for my own part, to getting up much earlier in the day than my social instincts, and to rejoicing in the informality of breakfast and lunch, which does away with any necessity for 'general conversation.'

"Custom decrees, however, that one's seat at *dinner*—unless the Vice-Principal calls one to the 'High'—should be taken without premeditation, and that everyone should then do what in her lies to promote 'the general joy of the whole table.' Of course, none but the most hardened offenders are ever heard to talk 'shop' at meals. By the way, classics and natural science, poles asunder otherwise, both seem to develop this tendency in their votaries. The hours between breakfast and lunch are variously filled up, according to the arrangement of your work; some have much coaching, some go to lectures in Cambridge, others have all their lectures at Newnham. But all the morning there is a perpetual *va et vient* between the college and the town, and a stranger, finding himself in Silver Street about ten o'clock, might be tempted to exclaim:

'There is sure another Flood toward, and these couples are coming to the Ark!' for it is mostly 'two-by-two' that we are to be seen wending our way, armed with note-books of every size and hue, to sit at the feet of our Gamaliels.

"You can lunch in Hall, either at 12.30 or at 1.15, and you are in private duty bound to devote the time between lunch and Hall tea, which goes on from three till four, to air and exercise. Whether you will play hockey, fives, or tennis, or go for a constitutional, will depend on your tastes, but there are few points on which college opinion is stronger than on the expediency, nay, duty, of doing one or the other. And here a word on our games. What would Newnham be without

them? The real reason why some of the maidens whom Tennyson's Princess gathered round her were discontented and *ennuyées* must have been that there were no *games* worth mentioning at her college. Those damsels would never have 'lain about the lawns' of an afternoon and 'murmured that their May was passing' if there had been tennis matches between their halls to play in, or if the rival colours of Blanche and Psyche had been sported on a hockey-ground. In the Michaelmas term, of which I am speaking, hockey and fives are very much in the ascendant, though tennis is also played all the winter.

"Hockey is not usually considered a graceful amusement, but one need only see it played at Newnham to realize that it can be at once exciting and pretty to watch; in fact, it was as an admiring spectator of our team practices that I first learnt the error of sup-



From a Painting by]

MISS CLOUGH—FOUNDER OF NEWNHAM.

[J. J. Shannon.

posing that the female form divine is unadapted for running gracefully. Devotees of this game will not hear of anything else being compared to it; it throws a spell over its votaries as potent, though less unaccountable than that exercised by golf. Like golf, too, if you do not love it madly it will have none of you: you had better not play at all. Fives was immensely popular last year, but it is too brief and concentrated a game to be anyone's sole form of exercise. Tennis is our most catholic diversion, being played and enjoyed by high and low in the ranks of our college and house clubs, and the extremes of good and bad play are often to be seen at once on adjoining courts.

"At this time of year there are not the same temptations to remain out of doors that make it so hard to work between tea and dinner in the May term. But when one has time, what

more pleasant than to go to King's for evening-song; to walk under the yellowing trees of 'the Backs' in the early twilight, and then to watch the twinkling lights and great overarching gloom of the chapel, 'and hear the mighty organ rolling waves of sound on roof and floor'?

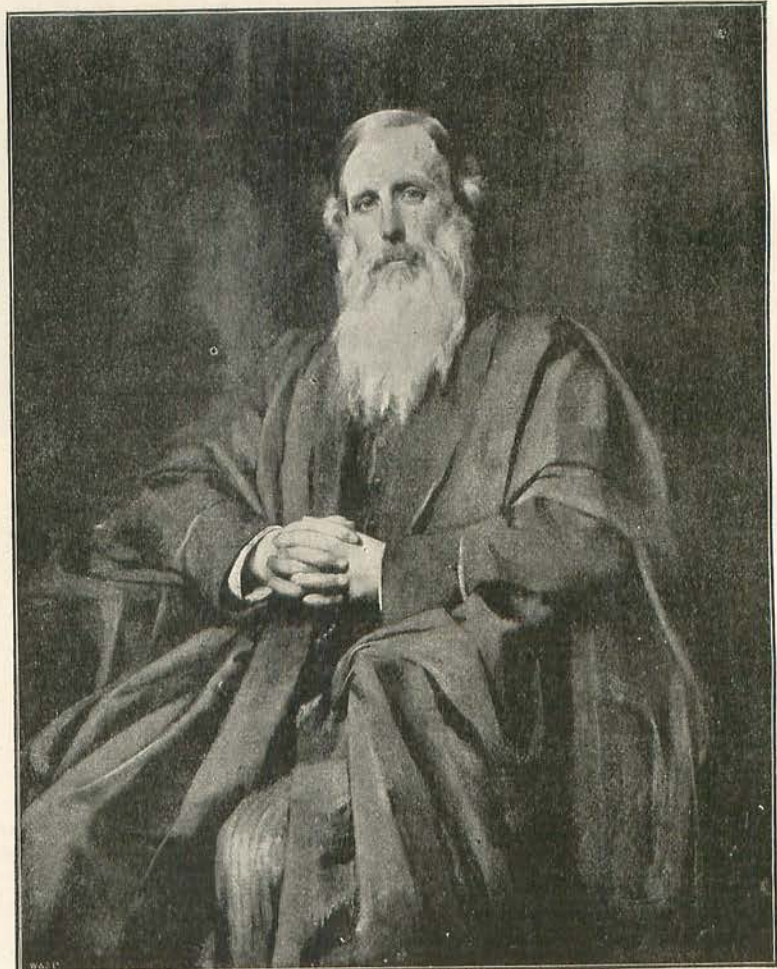
"Our dinner, or 'Hall,' at half-past six is the next event to be mentioned, but I have already said enough about our meals while on the subject of breakfast, and will pass on to the important hour between dinner and evening tea. Most college societies hold their meetings at this hour, and their name being legion, nothing but the inconvenience of being in two places at once prevents one from attending a couple of societies almost every night of the week.

"The largest and most important is the Debating Society, whose meetings, held twice a term, are our chief social events. A Newnham debate is always a pretty sight; the great hall is brilliantly lit; the dais, where the President graces her chair of state, is further decorated with groups of small palms and flowering plants, while the body of the hall is thronged with members and visitors, and looks like a bright-coloured parterre. The scene from the gallery, especially during the dancing that follows debates, ought to convince anybody that when lovely woman stoops to book-learning, she does *not* lose all interest in her personal appearance.

"All sorts and conditions of speakers are to be heard on these occasions, but few do themselves full justice in the rather trying posi-

tions of proposer or opposer of the motions discussed. The presence of visitors, the general air of pomp and circumstance, the fact that even one's own familiar friends look less familiar than usual *en grande tenue*, cause most people to feel a little shy and constrained, at least on commencing their remarks. Decidedly the best speeches are to be heard at our Political Society, which meets once a week, and models itself, at a humble and respectful distance, upon the House of Commons.

"We have, of course, a Speaker, a Government, and an Opposition; but tenure of office is with us a matter of amicable arrangement between the leaders of the Conservative, Gladstonian, and Liberal Unionist parties, who usually take it in turn to form a Ministry, which then flourishes, careless of majorities, for a couple of terms.



From a Painting by

PROFESSOR HENRY SIDGWICK.

[J. J. Shannon.



From a Painting by] MRS. HENRY SIDGWICK—PRINCIPAL OF NEWNHAM.

[J. J. Shannon.

“And now comes the very witching time of night when not only churchyards, but the industrious student, may begin to yawn. From eight till ten o’clock she has laboured in her vocation, secured, perhaps, from intrusion by our substitute for the ‘oak’ of other colleges—a slip of metal bearing the legend ‘Engaged,’ which can be displayed at pleasure on her door.

“Now is the time when lights are put out in the corridors, which, though dimly lit from within the rooms by glass ventilators above the doors, are filled in certain corners with a darkness that may be felt very distinctly by the shin or forehead of the inexperienced voyager after cocoa. To carry a candle would be a confession of incompetence that is universally disdained; but it is quite *en règle* for a ‘fresher’ to strike an occasional

match outside rooms that give forth sounds of revelry, in order to discover from the name on the door whether she has come to the right entertainment or must quest further.

“The word ‘cocoa,’ like the word ‘politics,’ of immortal celebrity, ‘surprises by himself,’ and I must try to supply its context for the uninitiated to whom it merely suggests a cup which cheers quite as little as it inebriates. Perhaps the simplest plan will be to follow one of the above-mentioned ‘freshers,’ who is bidden to a cocoa, and see what becomes of her.

“The scene changes to a bright and pretty room, where you will first be struck by the inhabitants, who, to the number of ten or fifteen, are all laughing, talking,

and drinking cocoa; and next by the climate, which has a tropic zone near the fire and an arctic one by the open window.

“Your hostess will be too busy making and dispensing the cocoa (assisted by a *fidus Achates*) to say much to you herself, but she will take care that you get embarked on the stream of vivacious talk about half a hundred subjects dear to the heart of girls in general and Newnhamites in particular. If you have not much to say yourself you will find it very good fun to listen and look on.

“Contrary to the received opinion of novelists, the sweet girl graduate has not one but many types, and college life, by giving free play to the athletic, the social, the musical, the managing, the hard-working, and half-a-dozen other instincts, tends as much to turn out women with a redeeming leaven of in-

dividuality as 'good society' does to make every girl an exact replica of every other in dress, language, ideas, and character.

"But come, it is long past eleven, and time to be going, for that student who looked in just now and casually remarked that we were making a good deal of noise, did so in the official capacity of 'J.P.' We elect justices of the peace from among ourselves, and, on a well-known principle, it is the noisiest people who are oftenest chosen for the office of maintaining comparative quiet during work hours and late at night. Strange to say, I have been a J.P. myself; but that was for quite a different reason."

I will conclude this record of a most agree-

able visit with that base ingratitude which is characteristic of wicked man by telling an irreverent story.

There is a legend that some time ago Mr. Gladstone planted a chestnut tree in the grounds at Newnham, but the naughty undergraduates from the neighbouring college of Selwyn managed by stratagem or bribery to spirit it away. They also sent cards to all the principal photographers of Cambridge instructing them to come and photograph it. The unsuspecting photographers arrived and found great lamentation, but no tree. Mr. Gladstone, however, was good enough to repeat the experiment, and the second tree is happily intact.



From a Photo. by]

A GROUP OF NEWNHAM GIRLS.

[Stearn, Cambridge.