

Girls' Schools of To-day.

II.—ST. LEONARDS AND GREAT HARROWDEN HALL.

By L. T. MEADE.



From a]

ST. LEONARDS SCHOOL—FROM THE EAST.

[Photograph.

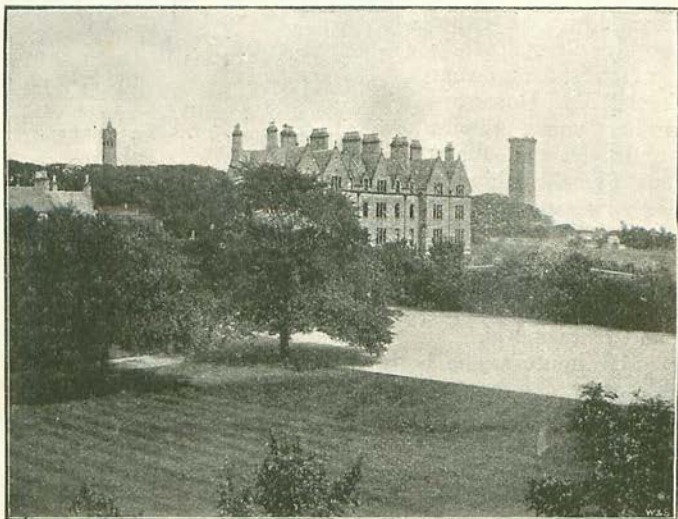
absolutely up to date — from the pleasant face of the head mistress to the keen expression in the bright eyes of the youngest pupil, all is vivacity, pleasure, and zest. The school is intended to provide girls with an education at moderate cost, which is as thorough as that given to boys at the great public schools. The number of girls is limited to two hundred. 'Speak-

FROM sunny Cheltenham to the keener air of St. Andrews is a considerable change, and there are also marked differences between the school of St. Leonards, at St. Andrews, and Cheltenham College. The former school was opened in 1877, under the management of a council. As at Cheltenham, there is the large principal building devoted to learning, and houses for resident pupils attached. The head mistress, Miss Dove, prides herself on being the first student to arrive at the famous Girton College. She speaks with a smile of the bricks and mortar, of the workmen lingering round, of the anxious greeting she received from Miss Davies, the mistress of the college, and, in short, of the general incompleteness. "Very different is the state of things at Girton now," she adds; "but I shall always feel proud of being the first student to enter that celebrated home of learning." Miss Dove began her life as a teacher at Cheltenham.

St. Leonards School is
Vol. ix.—59.

ing on this point, Miss Dove said: "I cannot do with more. I must be in touch, in absolute touch, with every girl in my school, and I feel that my limits are reached at two hundred. I wish to know everything about each girl who resides here—in short, I want to take the most motherly and complete supervision of each of these young lives."

These two hundred girls are divided into fifteen forms. The average number of pupils in each division does not exceed ten.



From a]

BISHOP'S HALL—ST. LEONARDS.

[Photograph.

In taking me round from form to form, Miss Dove explained very fully her reasons for keeping the divisions so small. She believed that a great number in a form was the primary cause of the failure which occasionally follows high-school education. It is impossible for one teacher to develop all the powers of thirty girls—the backward ones must go to the wall, the clever ones be unduly stimulated. At St. Leonards the fifth form is, for instance, divided into as many as five divisions. In one division—for advanced German—I saw only three girls. But these girls were equal in point of mental attainment, and were all in the best possible position to profit by the instruction afforded them. Miss Dove is able to declare that she has never sent a neglected girl from her school. Each girl, be she blessed with intelligence or the reverse, is educated to the utmost of her abilities. The head mistress does not approve of the system of cramming, and will not allow any girl to work at Latin and German together. She likes every girl to take up Latin, which she considers the basis of a sound education. Latin and French are, therefore, taught in all the lower forms, and in the more advanced either Greek or German.

"Don't take up your Greek," Miss Dove says to her young pupils, "until you can throw your French behind you." She will not allow girls to work both at German and Greek, and evidently prefers Greek from an educational point of view to German.

There are seven houses for the reception of resident students, and not more than twenty-one girls are ordinarily received in each house. The houses are provided with every comfort, and the life is made as home-like as possible. Each girl has her own cubicle, which is curtained off to resemble a complete little bedroom. The elder girls have each a writing table with a bookshelf for their special use in the schoolroom. The food is of the best. No work is done before

breakfast or after 8.30 p.m. The fees at St. Andrews are not high; for girls under fifteen years, seven guineas a term; for girls over that age, nine guineas. The fees for house girls under thirteen years of age are twenty-two guineas a term; over thirteen, twenty-five. No girls are admitted over seventeen years of age. The school course consists of Scripture, arithmetic, literature, history, Latin or German, French, mathematics, science, harmony, gymnastics, and part singing. Extra fees are charged for music, drawing, and dancing.

Miss Dove has strong opinions on the subject of an all-round education, and seeks

from the very first to develop both the body and mind of each girl. She has an immense belief in open-air exercise, and one of the specialities of the school is its extensive and splendid playground. This consists of about sixteen acres, and comprises cricket field, golf course, lawn and gravel tennis courts, fives court, etc.

It was delightful to see the girls at their play. The beautiful Canadian game of lacrosse was exercising all their faculties on the afternoon when I had the pleasure of seeing them. The girls are allowed to play in their gymnasium dress, which gives full scope to every limb and allows each muscle to be fully developed.

Miss Dove believes so fully in physical education, that one of her invariable rules is to have each girl weighed on her return to school at the beginning of a fresh term. If, for any reason, she is discovered to be below the average weight which she ought to be for her age and size, she is instantly "turned out to grass," and not allowed to study much. The judicious use of the gymnasium, and endless out-door games, are, in the head mistress's opinion, the education which she requires for the time being.

There was a keen east wind blowing on the day when I visited the school, but the



MISS DOVE, PRINCIPAL OF ST. LEONARDS.
From a Photo. by T. Rodger, St. Andrews.



FROM A]

THE LACROSSE TEAM—ST. LEONARDS.

[Photograph.

glowing faces of the happy girls as they vigorously pursued their out-door games showed that they were proof against the inclemencies of the weather. Miss Dove most emphatically declares that she has never had a case of mental breakdown in the school. It would be difficult to find anywhere a set of healthier or more robust-looking girls, and the fact that the attention paid to their physical development is not injurious to their intellectual progress is proved by the success gained by the pupils of St. Leonards in the published lists of the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Certificates. Miss Dove feels that she cannot enough emphasize the fact that the result of attention to the harmonious development of the physical, together with the intellectual, powers is distinctly advantageous to the intellectual.

The girls at St. Leonards all wear cloaks when out of doors. These are made of dark blue serge, and are lined with the colour of their house of residence. The girls who live in Miss Dove's house have Oxford and Cambridge blue linings to their cloaks and blue bobs on their Tam o' Shanter caps. In the house of another mistress I noticed that the colour was yellow.

Wherever possible, the mistresses of the school are selected from old pupils; this

same arrangement holds good at Cheltenham. The wisdom and justice of the choice is obvious, the head mistress or principal having already inculcated her own ideas and mode of education in the mind of the teacher.

As at Cheltenham, all that can possibly be done to educate the eye and develop a love for the best and most beautiful in art is to be seen in the school and houses. I shall never forget the photographs in Miss Dove's lovely house. She seemed to me to have a complete set of photographs from almost every gallery in Europe—these, in suitable frames, nearly cover the walls of hall, staircase, and reception-rooms. In the girls' dormitories there are also beautiful old prints and lovely photographs. These are presented by the mistresses, as the reward of perfect neatness and regularity as regards time. In Miss Sandys' house, who is an old teacher from Cheltenham, the æsthetic arrangements are charming and perfect enough to gratify the tastes of Morris and Burne Jones. In this house each bedroom had its particular colour, which extends to curtains, wall-paper, counterpanes, etc., one room being of the palest shade of primrose, another pink, another blue, another green.

The girls are given a great deal of liberty. Some parents may object to the amount of

freedom which they enjoy, but Miss Dove firmly believes in the wisdom of this mode of treatment.

"I trust them fully," she said. "I have never had my trust abused." This grand principle underlies all her success and gives a breezy, healthy tone to the place. The school, in short, is worthy of the historical old town where it is placed, and no happier lot could befall any girl than to become a resident there.

"I know," she says, "several cases in which the life of a girl has been made miserable, and the good, honest work she might have done has been spoiled, in her vain attempt to gratify the ambition of home friends in this manner."

Miss Beale and Miss Dove quite agree on the point that no girl ought to be allowed to enter for any public examination until she is over sixteen years of age. For younger girls



From a

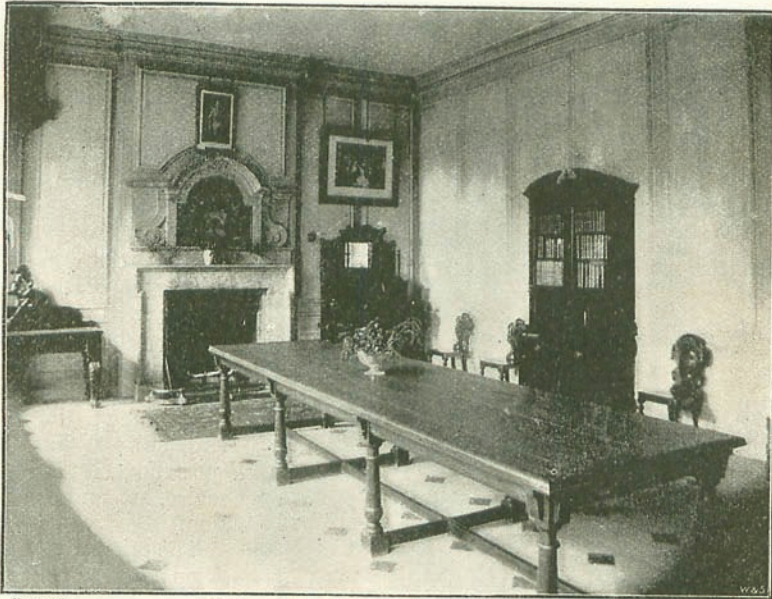
THE HOCKEY TEAM—ST. LEONARDS.

[Photograph.]

I had a long and interesting conversation with Miss Dove, who gave me her views on education in the main, and spoke of the best way in which it could be accomplished. She believes in school-life for girls, and thinks that the opportunity it affords for cultivating a public spirit and for co-operating with other girls is of immense benefit. It is, in her opinion, the lack of such opportunities that makes women's lives often so small and petty. One of the co-operative duties which school enjoins is that of regular attendance. No girl should ever be allowed to absent herself from school save for illness. The reason for this is that every other girl in her form suffers from her absence. Miss Dove does not believe in a girl struggling to beat all the rest in her form. Prizes and certificates, and even University honours, may be secured at too heavy a cost.

the worry and excitement at a time when they are growing rapidly is most injurious. Speaking of the high schools, Miss Dove says that the reason they are not invariably a success is a very simple one. The fees are too low. In consequence, the staff of teachers is not sufficient and the classes are much too large. Thus, those girls who are not brilliant must go to the wall. The remedy she considers quite simple. The fees should be raised to allow a sufficient number of teachers to be secured for the work, and those children who cannot afford the larger fees should go to the Higher Grade Board Schools. In several places such schools already exist, and many more will be started to meet the need.

This opinion with regard to the high schools is doubtless shared by many head mistresses, and was corroborated by one of



From a

CHARLES I.'S HALL.—GREAT HARROWDEN HALL.

[Photograph.]

the cleverest heads of departments at Cheltenham with whom I discussed the subject.

I am anxious now to say a few words about a totally different order of school.

Great Harrowden Hall, near Wellingborough, resembles, to a certain extent, the old-fashioned boarding-school. Only, however, to a certain extent—evils of the old system have given place to all that is best and widest in modern education, but the number of girls in the school is sufficiently small to make it as much a home as a school.

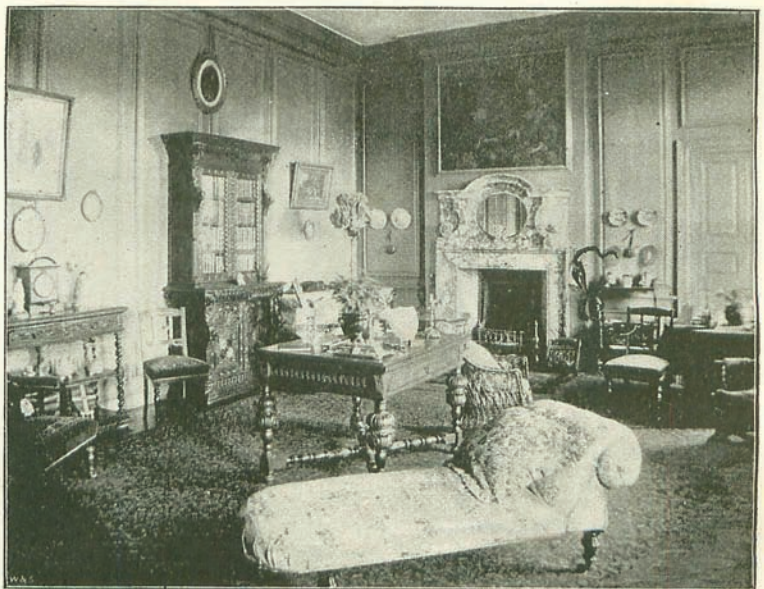
It would be difficult to find a more beautiful house of residence than the old historical hall of Harrowden. In the entrance-hall Charles I. is said to have held a Council; he is also believed to have played bowls on the green in front of the manor. The history of Harrowden is mixed up with that of the country. The present hall was probably built in the 16th and restored in

the 17th century. The date, 1687, is to be seen on the fireplace in the entrance-hall. The shields on the iron gates and on the massive stone piers in the gardens mark the occupancy of the families who, in succession, owned the hall. It is also believed that a meeting of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators was held in the house.

Over the quaint old fireplace in the beautiful drawing-room is a picture by Sir Peter Lely,

which hides the entrance to a secret chamber. The oak staircase which leads to the upper part of the house is one of the handsomest I have ever seen, and the old tapestry which covers the walls adds to the unique effect.

How such a manor became the property of a school it is impossible for me to say, but a brighter and more distinguished home it would be difficult to find. "*Noblesse oblige*" ought to be the motto of each girl



From a

DRAWING-ROOM, WITH PICTURE, BY SIR PETER LE LY, CONCEALING SECRET CHAMBER.—GREAT HARROWDEN HALL. [Photograph.]

who comes within these walls. I thought so as I looked around me, and some words which Miss Bartlett, the principal, said to me, made me inclined to think that the spirit which animated the girls was worthy of their place of residence.

"Mother," said one girl, speaking of her school, "we have to keep straight at Harrowden, for Miss Bartlett trusts us."

The house is surrounded by twenty acres, all beautifully laid out in gardens and recreation grounds. In addition to this there are sixty acres set aside for golf and riding. The girls lead a most healthy life, working, as seems to be the universal rule now in the best schools, only in the mornings, and devoting the afternoon and evening to games and preparation.

The grounds round Harrowden make an ideal play-ground. Here healthy exercise, in the shape of such games as cricket, hockey, tennis, is pursued with vigour.

I was present at the gymnasium, and never



PRINCIPAL OF GREAT HARROWDEN HALL.
From a Photo. by Fradette & Young.

saw better and more thorough teaching. It seemed to me that each of those girls' muscles was vigorously exercised. I attended lectures afterwards, in several of the class-rooms, and can testify to the excellence of the instruction. All the ordinary branches of education are thoroughly attended to at Harrowden; but if the school has a speciality, it is for music, art, and elocution.

The principal, Miss Agnes Bartlett, studied music at the Royal Conservatorium at Dresden, and is a pupil of Liszt, to whom she is indebted for the wonderful perfection of her playing. The musical

spirit of the principal is felt all through the school, and in pianoforte playing, violin playing, and also in singing, the performances of the elder pupils are considerably above the average.

Elocution, which is made a speciality, is taught in the most delightful manner by the well-known elocutionist, Miss Florence



From a

ORCHESTRAL PRACTICE—GREAT HARROWDEN HALL.

{Photograph.

Bourne, L.L.A. In addition to an excellent staff of resident teachers, the best professors come from London to instruct in the different branches of education. Drawing and painting are taught by a Fellow of Herkomer's School. An experienced riding-master teaches all those girls who care to learn to ride, and special horses are kept for their benefit. The whole life is full of interest and healthy stimulus. Above and over all, the home element preponderates. The girls and their teachers are all in absolute touch. The smiling glances which pass between their beloved principal and themselves are sufficient evidence of the warm place she holds in their hearts. She is the kind of woman who seems to take not only children but all creatures under her wing. The cats and dogs, the horses, even the canaries in the canary-house, receive a large share of her affectionate attention. There is a quiet look of power about her face, and her energy never disturbs her calm.

The terms, considering the advantages of the situation and the thoroughness of the education given, are for the general course of instruction particularly reasonable. Pupils under fifteen years of age are received for

twenty-five guineas a term ; over that age for thirty guineas.

Pupils may be prepared here for the entrance and scholarship examinations for the women's colleges, also for the examinations of the Royal College and Academy of Music.

In concluding this brief account of three distinguished schools, I should like to say a few words with regard to the objects effected by education so thorough and so stimulating. When all is said and done, we, as practical people, are obliged to think of the future. How will girls so educated conduct themselves in the battle of life? How, and in what honourable manner, can they earn their bread?

When speaking to Miss Beale on this point, she assured me that no girl who had gone through the full curriculum of education at Cheltenham had any cause to fear. Twenty-three are now head mistresses of important schools. All over the world Cheltenham girls have obtained excellent posts as mistresses and teachers. In medicine, in art, and literature, they have also distinguished themselves. The same may be said of the girls at St. Andrews, and such girls, so trained, must surely be the New Women for whom we long.



From a

THE CRICKET TEAM—GREAT HARROWDEN HALL.

[Photograph.]