

## A Russian Girton.

BY ALDER ANDERSON.

“**L**T was now a common thing to see young virgins so trained in the study of good letters that they willingly set all other vain practices at naught for learning’s sake.”

Thus wrote Mr. Udall, a famous master of Eton, nearly four hundred years ago, in a preface to a work written by the Princess Mary before she came to the throne.

Between the years 1500 and 1600, indeed, to whatever cause attributable, there arose in England a perfect galaxy of women who, without abdicating a single one of the prerogatives of their sex, rivalled, sometimes even surpassed, on their own ground, the most learned men of the age. “The times are topsy-turvy,” exclaimed Erasmus—the most learned man who ever lived. “Monks now know nothing of letters, while women dote on books.”

Good ground had the author of the “Praise of Folly” for wonder. The celebrated daughters of Sir Thomas More, Lady Jane Grey, Mary of Scotland, and Mary of England, Lady Burleigh, Lady Bacon, and many another, including the greatest of them all, that bright Occidental star, Queen Elizabeth, were all nearly contemporaneous.

“God’s death, my lords! I have been forced this day to scour up my old Latin that hath long lain rusting,” said the Queen, apologetically, to her courtiers, when, her fiery spirit roused by the insolent attitude of the King of Poland’s Ambassador, she fell back on the language of Cicero, as better suited to express the indignation that was boiling in her breast. The audacious envoy winced and blanched as he listened to the

scathing, voluble denunciation from the lips of the woman he had ventured to insult.

In spite of the raillery of the wits, in which there may just have been a *souçon* of jealousy, the traditions of that sixteenth century have never been entirely lost in England. Neither the bright shafts of Molière’s irony nor the vicious stabs of the little humpbacked genius of Twickenham could kill the movement so auspiciously inaugurated. “Artemisia,” who, though “she talks by fits of councils, classics, fathers, wits, reads Malebranche, Boyle, and



From a

THE UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN AT ST. PETERSBURG.

[Photograph.]

Locke,” yet neglects to keep either her nails or her dresses clean, was never typical, but of the parasites that must invariably accompany every movement good or bad. A race of gentlemen from Hanover, who liked neither “boetry” nor “bainting” in man, much less Latin or Greek in woman, occupied the throne that had once been Elizabeth’s, but they, too, one after another went their way. All the time there was someone to carefully trim and hand on to trusty hands the sacred lamp, until, about three decades since, women students were for the first time admitted to attend lectures in Cambridge University. The event created furious discussion at the time, but, in reality, the chief point remarkable about it was, perhaps, that it had

been so long in coming to pass. Men had been encroaching more and more without apparent shame on woman's domain. A writer on sociology in the earlier part of the century just ended stigmatized the ousting of women from drapers' shops as one of the most reprehensible customs of our times. "It is really humiliating," he says, "to see young men, in the prime of life, engaged in selling tapes, caps, and ribbons, and bestowing as much consideration on the shades and shapes of one of these articles as a statesman would on framing an Act of Parliament." Even

It is interesting to see the steps by which the same problem has been solved in Russia, the Russia which inspired Elizabeth with such horror, when the question was mooted of her sojourning there; the Russia of which Elizabeth's successor, James I., was so ignorant, that he did not even know the proper title of the Czar; the Russia where women, barely a century and a half ago, had less opportunity for culture than have the women of Turkey to-day.

In 1861 the first formal request was made by a Russian woman for admission to follow



From a]

STUDENTS AT BREAKFAST.

[Photograph.

yet, Girton and Newnham Colleges are quite inaccessible to slenderly-garnished purses, the idea that a good education must necessarily be a costly luxury dying hard in democratic England.

The nation seems to be, at last, awakening to the conviction that it may possibly be living in a fool's paradise, a fact long distressingly apparent to many not hypnotized by a glorious past and its idols. We have practical proof before our eyes of what follows the application of more liberal ideas, in the prosperity of men of our own race in America. The writer of an official report of last year on female education in the United States attributes "the phenomenal industrial progress" of the country to the fact that "the men of the poorer classes have had, as a rule, mothers as well educated as their fathers; indeed, better educated. Our commercial rivals," he goes on to say, "could, probably, take no one step that would so tend to place them on a level with American competition as to open to girls without distinction all their elementary and secondary schools for boys."

the medical course at a University. Contrary to what took place in England, the proposal encountered practically no opposition, either from the profession or the public, and by the following year the sight of women attending lectures in the St. Petersburg Academy of Medicine and Surgery had ceased to be a novelty for anyone. Since then the privilege has, for various reasons, been temporarily withdrawn once or twice, but the medical education of women in Russia is now so firmly established that one of the largest hospitals in St. Petersburg, containing more than 600 beds, has just been opened for the instruction of the students. At the beginning of 1900 there were 500 students attending the Women's Institute of Medicine, a large proportion of whom look with confidence to find an outlet for their energies in the Asiatic provinces of the Empire. In 1899 a residential college was completed, at a cost of nearly £30,000, to accommodate 117 students.

The first idea of founding a special University for Women, apart from the study of medicine, dates from 1866. It originated

in a circle of literary women in St. Petersburg, the chief initiative being taken by Mrs. Konradi, the editress of an admirably conducted weekly paper *Nedelia*. In May, 1868, a petition signed by 400 of the leading ladies in the capital was presented to the rector of the St. Petersburg University, begging for his aid in favour of the establishment of a University for Women. Not only did the rector give the project his hearty support at once, but public opinion adopted it without hesitation as if it had been the most natural proposition in the world. One of the first letters of congratulation received by the promoters from abroad was written by John Stuart Mill.

A committee set about organizing the affair without delay. All the most eminent professors at the University put their services at the committee's disposal, and by the end of a few weeks various series of lectures for women in literature, science, and mathematics were arranged and numerous attended. A few months later women were admitted to follow the lectures given in various educa-

from men, but from women. By January, 1870, they had so far succeeded as to have secured the use of certain class-rooms for evening lectures, and from that first year the students numbered over 900. The fees were fixed at only £2 10s. for the half-year. Just at the same time Girton was making a somewhat painful beginning with five pupils in a house at Hitchin. Newnham dates from 1871.

To return to Russia, however. After a lapse of a few years it became clear that, if the new teaching was to bear as good fruit as it should, some pains would have to be taken with its organization. The lectures were suspended for three years therefore, from 1875 until 1878, when they were recommenced on a different footing. There were three faculties—literature, science, and pure mathematics. Candidates for admission had to prove that they had finished a course of education at a gymnasium or its equivalent. The fees were now £10 annually; and within a year or two the revenue amounted to nearly £6,000, exclusively from this source.



From a]

THE PHYSICAL LABORATORY.

[Photograph.

tional establishments, in company with students of the opposite sex. In many of the American States the system of co-education of the sexes has been in operation with the most satisfactory results for three-quarters of a century, and, however galling it may be to male *amour propre*, it has actually been established beyond cavil that the *average* woman is intellectually slightly superior to the *average* man.

This was not what Russian women wanted, however; they had set their hearts on having a regular separate University for Women, and it is noticeable that, in the United States also, any objections to co-education come, not

The Women's University had still no capital and no house it could call its own, the lectures being held, on sufferance only, in the class-rooms of a school lent for the evening by the Government. To remedy this, a number of sympathizers with the movement formed themselves into a Society for the Protection of Higher Studies for Women, each member subscribing 10s. annually. Subscriptions and donations poured into the hands of the treasurer, Mrs. Barbe de Tarnovsky, one of the principal promoters of the movement from the first. First the Government accorded an annual subsidy of £300 yearly, then the Municipality of St.

Petersburg did the same, and at the end of a year or two, with no more official help than this, a large University for Women, costing, with the ground, nearly £25,000, had been erected in close proximity to the University and other principal educational establishments of the capital.

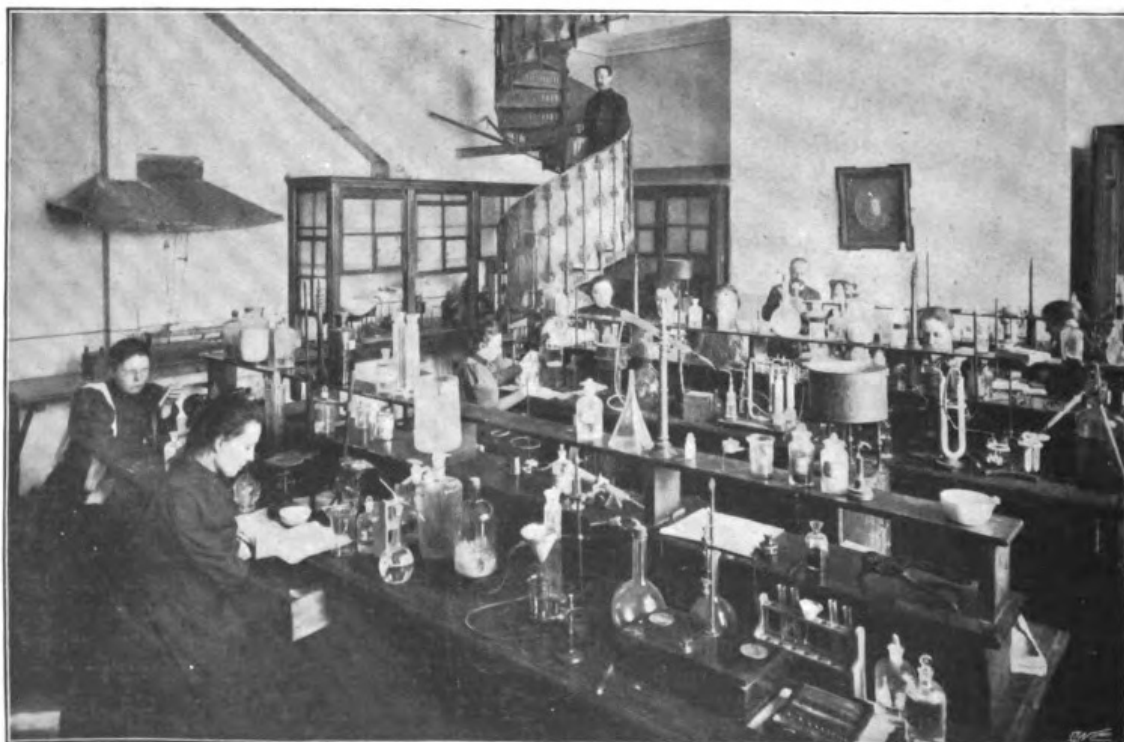
Before she is allowed to attend the University the Russian girl must furnish a great variety of what the French term *papiers*. In addition to a certificate of ability, she must produce birth and baptism certificates, the written consent of her parents or guardians, several photographs of herself, proof that she has sufficient means to live decently during the continuance of her studies, and, finally, a testimonial as to her morality, which she must obtain from the head of the police. There is no entrance examination, but the candidates who possess the best testimonials are selected first. The college fees amount to £10 annually, payable in two half-yearly instalments in advance.

There are two faculties, the exact equivalent of those in men's Universities: one the historical-philological faculty — by far the most popular; the other the physical-mathematical faculty; Latin, German, French, theology, and choral singing are taught in both.

The Government at first limited the number of students to 400, but the appli-

cations were so numerous that the maximum had very soon to be raised to 600, and subsequently increased, until last year there were no fewer than 960 students. It was stipulated by the Government that students must either live with their parents or with near relatives, or else in quarters under the supervision of the "Society." Young ladies living free and unfettered were not to be tolerated, a restriction for which there are many very valid reasons.

This made it naturally indispensable, if the University was to open to students without relatives in St. Petersburg, that lodgings of some kind should be provided. At first several houses were rented for the purpose; but by 1895 a large residential building adjoining the University had been erected, at a cost of about £17,000, with accommodation for eighty-five pupils. They are each charged £30 annually, which sum covers their board, lodging, lights, and washing, just a trifle over what they actually cost. When the balance-sheet is made up at the end of the year the difference between the exact cost and the sum paid is returned to the pupils. On one occasion this amounted to nearly £4 each. From this it will be seen that £40 a year covers both the college fees and all other expenditure, apart from dress. First year's students share a room between two; senior students have a room for themselves. A feature of every Russian bedroom



From a]

THE CHEMICAL LABORATORY.

[Photograph.



From a]

ONE OF THE LECTURE-ROOMS.

[Photograph.

may be seen in the little pile of pillows, without which no Russian bed would be considered complete.

The public rooms, such as the recreation-room and dining-room, are open both to resident and non-resident students. The latter can have any meals they may require at prices which are phenomenally low: fourpence for breakfast, sixpence for lunch, and sevenpence halfpenny for dinner.

The teaching is given, as in the Men's University, exclusively by means of lectures, examinations being held at the end of the year and on the conclusion of the course of study, which is of three or four years' duration. The girls are expected to take notes of the lectures, and frequently, though for the most part guiltless of any knowledge of shorthand, acquire a dexterity in the task that would put to the blush many a so-called reporter.

If the final examination be passed satisfactorily a certificate is given to testify to the fact, just as a man receives on terminating his University career. Neither one nor the other has degrees conferred

so well after her name. The intelligent foreigner pokes a good deal of sly fun at us for this national foible, just as we are inclined to laugh at the Frenchman who decorates every button-hole he can with the ribbon of the Legion of Honour.

The University contains a most complete series of laboratories, for physics, botany, zoology, mineralogy, physiology, and chemistry. The last-named is particularly well fitted up, and provided with every description of apparatus for research. It was the gift of a private donor, Mrs. O. N. Roukavichnikova. This is but one out of many noble donations from Russian ladies.

The library, which is constantly growing, as all libraries should, contains already over

as in England in exchange for what, to a poor man, may be a prohibitory cash payment. The Russian University girl has not, therefore, the same grievance as her Girton sister, who complains sometimes that, after passing the same examination as the men, she is not allowed to purchase the right to use a few mysterious letters which would look



From a]

THE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AND HIS PUPILS.

[Photograph.



From a]

THE LIBRARY.

[Photograph.

24,000 volumes. As is the case with the other Universities, the Women's University is allowed to procure any books or manuscripts it may want from abroad, without having to pay any import duties and without asking the approval of the Government censor. This, it need hardly be said, is a privilege most keenly appreciated in Russia. The three librarians are all women. Of the forty-seven professors, however, who form the principal teaching staff, three only are women.

In 1897 a second residential house was bought for £8,000, in which forty pupils can be lodged, and at the present moment a new University building is almost completed, the bill for which comes to £18,500. In the first fifteen years of existence the Society for the Protection of Higher Studies for Women has expended in buildings over £60,000. In one single year its income from every source has amounted to as much as £20,000.

Old students are already to be found in almost every profession to which women have as yet

access, though, just as is the case with old Cambridge students, the majority of those obliged to gain their livelihood adopt teaching of one kind and another. It is interesting to note that, in America, considerably over 50 per cent. of all the teachers in secondary schools, whether public or private, are women: in speaking of a teacher, the average American instinctively employs the feminine pronoun "she." Journalism and literature—not always synonymous terms—have gained fifty-seven recruits, while three students have been stage-struck. Nearly one-half of the students have married either before or after the termination of their studies.

The Russian Women's University is but one phase of the extraordinary educational activity which is one of the most noticeable features of the Russia of the present day. Without a proper equipment of knowledge the modern Russian, male or female, finds all avenues to advancement absolutely closed.



From a]

THE STUDY AND BEDROOM OF TWO STUDENTS.

[Photograph.