



[Stearn, Cambridge.]

From a photo by]

EXTERIOR OF NEWNHAM.

NEWNHAM—AND AFTER.

BY CHRISTABEL OSBORN.



THE women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge have recently been brought prominently before the notice of the public through the discussion on the granting of degrees, and the vexed question of the value to women of a university education, its nature and its results, has been considered again and again. The powerful fascination which college life exercises over many girls is undeniable. They look forward to it with the greatest eagerness; they look back to it with the keenest pleasure. As an old Newnham student, if I had to make out a case for the existence of the college I could hardly find a stronger argument than the dreamlike happiness of the two, three or four years that are spent there. I have known students belonging to every year from the first foundation of the college to the latest "fresher," and have never met one who did not speak of college life with enthusiasm. Even if that were all, and if college life had no great and permanent results, the assurance of three years of happiness would be well worth having. But in what does this wonderful happiness consist? What is this magic glamour that surrounds life at Newnham, separating it from ordinary life in the work-a-day world?

The main object of the college is study, and study must certainly be named first among its charms. To a girl with the student nature, who has hitherto been confined within the somewhat narrow limits of a school curriculum, touching many subjects and seeing the full scope of none, the work for any honours course comes as a revelation. She is possessed with a desire for knowledge—for knowledge for its own sake, without a thought of any utilitarian considerations—and that absorbing desire she can now satisfy, with no check but the inevitable limitations of human brain and human strength. Lectures bring her into direct contact, mind to mind, with the best men who have written and thought on the chosen subjects, and open to her new fields of knowledge, or fill with light and order the chaotic mass of disjointed facts gathered from much unguided reading. This desire for knowledge is much assisted by the nature of a tripos, for there is certainly no examination more thoroughly inimical to cram, and no course of study in which so little reference is made to a candidate's needs and requirements. There are but few of the student class who can afterwards lead the student life. They enter professions, or are engaged at home in various occupations, and in many cases it is perhaps

as well, for the student life has its own peculiar drawbacks, like every other life that is concentrated on one single all-absorbing interest; but at least, during one brief period, a faint but still a real and living idea of the infinity and glory of knowledge is gained, and remains a priceless acquisition through the whole of life. There is no better way than a college course for obtaining a clear

perception of one's own ignorance, and many a girl, fresh from the headship of a school or from honours in a local examination, admits: "When I left school I thought I knew something, but now —" Then follows an expressive blank.

The mental training of an honours course is invaluable, quite apart from the actual knowledge gained, no matter what profession or occupation is taken up subsequently. During those three years of quiet study the mind is lifted to a higher intellectual plane; thoroughness, accuracy, above all, the way to think, to read, to work are learnt.

It seems hard to exclude from all the advantages of Cambridge life and training the many girls whose intellectual powers are not equal to the highly specialised study required for a tripos, and who would be merely entering on a disheartening effort to

do work for which they were unfitted; and Newnham, in a generous spirit, has endeavoured to some extent to meet the difficulty by opening her doors to students who can only reside for one or two years. The advisability of admitting women to the Pass examinations is a question on which opinion, even among university women, is much divided, and perhaps there is some reason

to doubt whether life is quite long enough to spend three years in acquiring the knowledge at present requisite to take the Ordinary.

But beside the intellectual training there is the college life, with all it implies; the influence of lecturers and students, the games, the societies, the friendships, with the long talks far into the night, and the proud privilege of belonging, even in an unrecognised manner, to the grand old university, with its great traditions and its inspiring record of noble



From a photo by]

MRS. SIDGWICK.

[Elliott & Fry.

ones. Some of these advantages could, no doubt, be obtained elsewhere; and, in the same way, the widening influence which a college course has on the majority of girls must depend to a very large extent on the homes and surroundings from which they come. But few are so fortunately situated as to possess already many of the charms of Cambridge life. There are the games, where

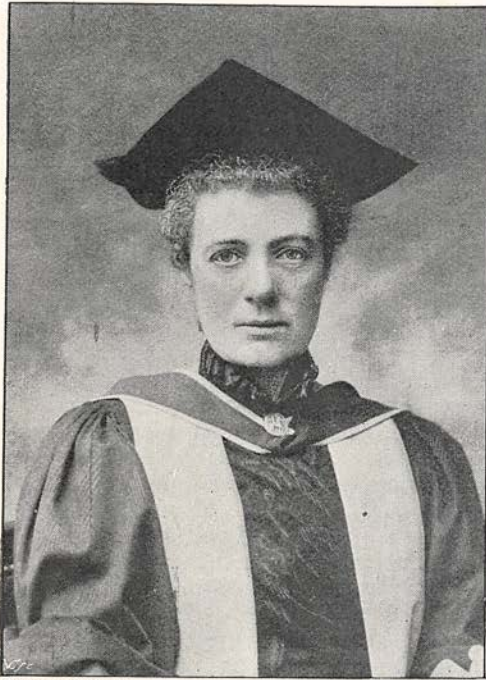
girls can cultivate *esprit de corps*, courage, good temper, and all those qualities of eye, and hand, and mind, so much required in every good game, whether lawn tennis, hockey, or fives. There are the societies, which give a real training in speaking and in the proper way to conduct business. The keen debates in the Newnham Parliament at any rate teach the study of the newspapers, and lead even the most prejudiced party politician to read and endeavour to give a reason for the faith that is in her. Crude and elementary as are often the opinions expressed by the honourable members, yet they learn from each other, and at least they take a real interest in the stirring questions of the hour; they do not sit with their eyes on their books and let them pass by. Later on they may often look back with a smile to their narrow enthusiasms and limited views, but it is the stage through which every eager mind must pass to better things.

But perhaps the greatest and most lasting joy of college life lies in the friendships formed there. College life has disproved the charge—if indeed it was ever true—that women are incapable of friendship. In the monotony and loneliness of many a woman's after work—and how lonely and how monotonous that can be few but the workers themselves are aware—amid uncongenial surroundings and narrowing influences, these college friendships remain the greatest source of happiness, while a wealth of common memories and associations makes a happy freemasonry between every Newnham student.

Even women, sometimes, hardly realise how much they owe to the pioneers of higher education at Cambridge. How much is due to a woman like the late Miss Clough, at once the untiring, patient, courageous leader in a great cause, and the most gentle, lovable and womanly character, so that to have known her and worked under her must always be felt as a high privilege and honour, while future students will look back with loving pride to the first principal of Newnham College.

It is to Miss Clough and her fellow-workers that, to a great extent, we owe the fact that knowledge is not now considered absolutely detrimental to a woman, and that the feeling which led to the special production of young ladies' manuals in different subjects, suited to the weakness of the feminine intellect, has become a thing of the past, while a capacity to walk a couple of miles without fatigue is not thought an undeniable proof of want of refinement.

The movement that resulted in the foundation of Newnham College is now more than a quarter of a century old. Lectures to women were started in Cambridge mainly through the efforts of Professor Sidgwick, and girls began to come up from different parts of the country to take advantage of them; and in October 1871 Miss Clough opened a house in Regent Street, looking over Parker's Piece, with five students. The facilities for work enjoyed by those pioneers of the college were few indeed compared to what they are now. Hardly any lectures were open to them; there was no laboratory for the science students; and most of the work had to be done by the help of private coaching. There were no gardens, no games, no societies; an occasional hour in the town gymnasium was all the athletic amusement possible. But by the end of the first year the house in Regent Street had become too small for the growing number of students and a move was made to a quaint, old-fashioned place, not far from St. John's College, known as Merton Hall. Creepers twined round all the windows, whence wandering spiders came to disturb the studios, and in the short May nights the nightingales charmed away sleep with their melody. In the delightful old garden tea parties were held and mild games of cricket were played; societies and dances began to be organised, and the debating society, which still prospers, came into existence. The students, too, could proudly declare that they inhabited the old school of Pythagoras, where the monks of Ely came to lecture before the foundation of the University of Cambridge. But again they became too numerous for the building, and a colony was established elsewhere, known as Sandford, and finally, for a year, the whole body took up their quarters at a house in Bateman Street, until such time as that part of Newnham, now known as the Old Hall, was ready for their habitation. In that year the first two students successfully underwent the ordeal of a tripos examination, both taking up moral science, while in the following year both the mathematical and classical tripos were mastered by a single student. Soon the Old Hall was full to overflowing, and temporary arrangements had to be made until a second hall, Sidgwick Hall, could be built and opened. The year 1881 was an important one for women's education. On February 24 the senate passed the memorable graces formally opening the Honour and Previous examinations to women and granting them a duly signed



From a photo by]

[H. & R. Stiles.

MISS JANE HARRISON.

and sealed certificate. Old students still recall with enthusiasm on Commemoration Day that exciting time, when the friends of the women's college came up from all parts of the country to vote and carried the graces by the triumphant majority of 398 to 32. Since that time Newnham has continued to increase steadily. Clough Hall was built; the road which ran through the centre of the college grounds, separating Old Hall from the other two halls, was taken away and the whole of the gardens united, and finally the Pfeiffer building was added, where Mrs. Sidgwick, the present principal, now resides with her husband, Professor Sidgwick, one of the oldest friends and greatest benefactors of the college. Newnham can well pride itself on its gardens, which rival in beauty those of the older colleges, though their appearance has not been improved by the establishment, in a prominent position, of the new observatory. It is rather an obtrusive object, and lovers of the beautiful can only hope that, like the laboratory, it will soon be half concealed by trees. That dear resort of the science students, with its fine atmosphere of mixed chemicals, has been recently enlarged to almost double its former size, and has become one of the best laboratories in Cambridge, after the university one.

Among her early students Newnham is

proud to reckon Miss Jane Harrison, who recently received the honorary degree of LL.D. from the University of Aberdeen. To a question as to the value of a university training for women Miss Harrison replied, "Though my work in archaeology is outside the work I did at Cambridge, yet the education I received there was a necessary preliminary. The training was invaluable, chiefly because it brought me into contact with first-rate men and to an understanding of their attitude and opinions. I think it indispensable for all women taking up a liberal profession."

Miss Harrison is of opinion that a Cambridge course is more valuable than working for a London degree, "because," she remarked, "the system by which knowledge is acquired by personal contact is far more valuable than the actual knowledge. Then, too, so little notice is taken of the examination at Cambridge that a first-rate literary training can be gained. In the stress of home life and the discomfort of lodgings it is not possible for girls to do the work without excessive strain. With regard to the value of college life, apart from its intellectual side," she continued, "I cannot imagine any ordinary girl not benefiting by it, though there may be exceptional cases.



From a photo by]

MISS STAWELL.

[Bullingham.

My closest friends were made at Newnham. Women, too, are often rather defective in good-fellowship and sociality, but they gain these qualities at college; they learn to enjoy the society of other women without being hindered from enjoying the society of men."

The charge that college girls get discontented with home life Miss Harrison does not think justified, except where they come from sordid, narrow homes, "but then all who rise to better things must suffer, and at any rate they gain congenial friends."

Miss Harrison's opinion is closely echoed by another classical student of a later date, Miss F. M. Stawell, the first Newnham student to gain a place in the first division first class of the classical tripos. Her views are specially interesting from her previous experience as a student of Trinity College, Melbourne University. She too speaks strongly of the advantages gained through education by personal contact, and believes that what might be considered drawbacks in some ways to a Cambridge course—its excessive specialisation, rigidity and concentration on pure theory, and the severity of letting the student alone as much as possible—are often positive advantages to a woman.

"They help to give her what she usually lacks—self-reliance and the faculty of independent work, precision and close accuracy of thought. The influence of the life is more difficult to define, though it is often the most important part. It is an excellent thing for young women as for young men to have a sort of half-way house between home and the world. The semi-independence of collegiate life is just what is wanted—freedom to manage the details of one's life and decide on the smaller points

without the responsibility in larger matters. Then there is the invaluable charm of finding comrades, and the influence on life and character of the women who are or have been at the head of the college.

"There is the charm, too, of Cambridge itself," said Miss Stawell, "which always seems to me to look like what it is, secluded, detached from the world, if you like, and with the dangers that that implies, but still full of strenuous thought and some great lives, and splendid traditions from the past and promise of work and knowledge in the future."



From a photo by]

[Stearn, Cambridge.

DINING HALL OF NEWNHAM.

But if the fascination of college life can be easily explained, there is another question to be answered: What becomes of all the highly educated girls who leave Newnham every year? Is their training of much assistance to them in the occupations they take up? As might be expected, the majority of past students who are earning their own living have entered some branch of the teaching profession. Out of 667 students leaving the college between 1871 and 1893, 374 took up teaching. The staff of Newnham College itself is very largely composed of past students. Miss Helen Gladstone, vice-principal of Sidgwick Hall, was a student, and Miss M. G. Rickett, vice-principal



From a photo by]

[H. H. Cameron.

MISS KATHARINE STEPHEN,
(Vice-principal of Clough Hall.)

of the Old Hall, was Newnham's first wrangler. Miss Stephen however, the vice-principal of Clough Hall, is not connected with the college by the same tie. Newnham students are working in high schools, both as head and assistant-mistresses, in elementary schools and in training colleges in all parts of the world. A charge of want of originality in their choice of professions is often brought against them on the strength of such figures as I have given. But it must be remembered that there is no occupation in which a Cambridge course is of more immediate value than in teaching. Parents are generally apt to regard their daughters' education from a utilitarian standpoint, and to treat a university course purely as an investment, which would be thrown away in any profession where it did not bring in any direct pecuniary returns. It is easy also to forget how extremely limited still is the number of professions open to educated women, and that teaching is the easiest of all to take up. Such an explanation as this is only too common: "I would rather not have

taken up teaching, but it was absolutely necessary that I should earn my living at once."

The great mass of men who leave the universities are absorbed by the Church, the Bar, the Civil Service and the schools; but the two first of these professions are entirely closed to women, while only the lowest branches of the Civil Service are open to them, under such restrictions as to age which would probably prevent the entrance of any university women should they desire it.

Some few Newnham students are engaged in medical work; one indeed holds the important post of senior medical physician to the Khama Hospital, Bombay. But though a natural science course is a useful preliminary to the study of medicine it is seldom taken up at Cambridge. There it is impossible for women to pursue at the same time their medical work, so that it considerably lengthens an already long and costly period of preparation.

Of the other students leaving during the period mentioned, 230 are living at home, of whom 108 are married. These figures suggest the question whether a university training is a help or hindrance in family life. If there is one point on which the advocates of ignorance in women have been more sure than any other it is that learning and house-keeping do not go together. But Newnham could supply plenty of instances to the contrary. A student now teaching successfully in a school of her own remarked, when questioned on the subject, "The important gain



From a photo by]

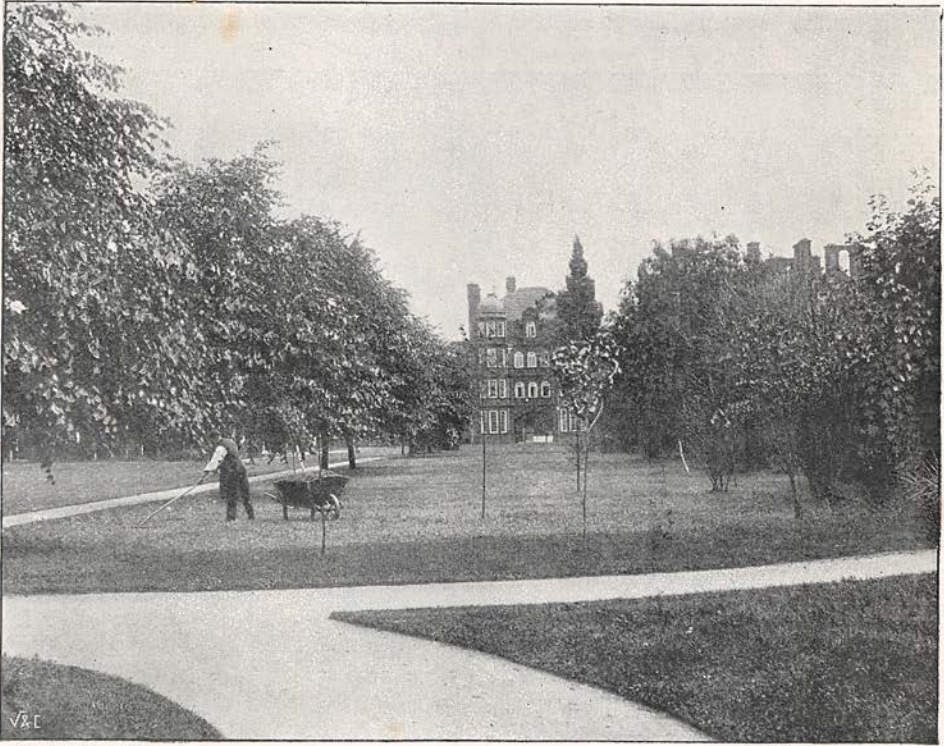
[Lord, Cambridge.

MISS RICKETT,
(Vice-principal of Old Hall.)

in general mental training tells in every sort of work. The life and work and all the surrounding influences have a widening, broadening, deepening effect on the character; they make a better, more competent, more developed woman, not necessarily than some other woman who has not been to college, but than the same woman would have been without this training. I believe this tells in every walk of life, in every occupation, even in scrubbing a room; it should make women better wives, better

particularly in science and history, has been carried on by several past Newnham students; but it has not been of a popular character. Papers read before scientific societies, or published in scientific magazines, are seldom noticed or understood except by specialists.

Comparatively few students have taken up literature in any form, though among those few is numbered Amy Levy, whose brief life was hardly long enough for the full development of her unusual powers. Two or three



From a photo by]

THE GARDEN OF NEWNHAM.

[Stearn, Cambridge.

mothers, better housekeepers, and, from what I have seen, I believe it is so."

A similar answer was given by another old student, who is happily married.

"Girls gain at college the habit of work; they can read, and are not likely to be bored by a quiet home life. I have tried hard to think of a drawback," she added in answer to an entreaty to hear the other side, "but I can't suggest any."

Some consideration is also due to the oft-reiterated question, "When did woman ever yet invent?" Without recalling the many obstacles which still debar women from doing constructive work, original research, more

students are following the thorny path of journalism—a profession in which a university training is often considered rather a drawback than otherwise. It is possible that the thoroughness of Cambridge study gives a distaste for the superficiality, combined with an affectation of omniscience, that characterises some journals. A more important point is that the indefinable quality known as journalistic instinct is developed rather by the study of life than the study of books. Moreover, academic training leads, perhaps, to an over-valuing of all knowledge that is enshrined between leather covers, and to a neglect of that deeper knowledge and wider

culture gained from contact with men and women in every class of life. But these drawbacks are not inevitable, and a trained judgment and disciplined habits of thought must be of great value in all serious journalism. It is very difficult for most girls to obtain that wide knowledge of life so desirable in a journalist; but compared with ordinary home life, college is a better preparation, for it does bring girls into contact with a great variety of people of differing opinions, tastes and characters. Another objection urged against a college training is that it unfits women for the usual

journalistic work assigned them; but this is rather an indictment against journalism than against university life. An absorption in changes of fashion, in society gossip, in small personal details about people and things, in an eternal light side, to the exclusion of all serious treatment of important subjects, must as a rule be harder for a highly educated,

thoughtful woman than for one who is the reverse. And not only does this kind of journalistic work generally pay the best, but it is often the only kind accessible to a woman. As a Newnham journalist somewhat bitterly remarked: "A college career is a hindrance, because the work that needs specialist training is regarded as the monopoly of men. What is the good of a classical education which leads to polish and refinement of thought and style, when what is wanted is sensational, sometimes even vulgar, description? But if women had a fair share of the higher journalism a college training would

be a help, and in this respect if more educated women enter the profession who are fit to do the best work, and have money enough to enable them to refuse to do the inferior, matters would right themselves."

Another old student, a journalist and a lecturer, and a prominent member of the advanced Socialist party, considers too that college life provides a useful platform for all those who have to climb the steep incline of professional life. They start higher up, and in her own experience she has always found it a great advantage. The only drawback is that it is as yet but a class privilege.

That this drawback exists at present is undeniable, though it has still been possible for girls from elementary schools to make their way to Newnham by means of scholarships; at the same time there are few places where social distinctions are less regarded than at college, or where the possession of a grandfather is of less account. The spirit is democratic,



From a photo by]

MISS HELEN GLADSTONE.
(Vice-principal of Sidgwick Hall.)

[Window & Grove.

although it may be that in after life university women have not altogether escaped the error sometimes charged against university men, of thinking themselves the "cream of the universe," and regarding with disdain all culture that does not bear the university stamp. The strongest proof of the value of a three years' course at Newnham must necessarily be the testimony of those who have taken it, and when that testimony is practically unanimous in its favour it is hard to believe that the value is imaginary, or that the same advantages could easily be obtained in some other way,