



THE QUADRANGLE OF GIRTON COLLEGE.

CONCERNING GIRTON.

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Illustrated by W. PILGRIM HODGSON and F. L. FULLER.



THE popular impression of a Girton girl is, I believe, that she is a wan and pale young lady, that she wears spectacles, that she is a mere bundle of nerves, and that, somewhat in the manner attributed to Ophelia, she wanders round muttering snatches from Greek plays or cudgelling her wearied brains for solutions of mathematical problems of abstruse kind. That this idea is a mistaken one it is hardly necessary to point out. The Girtonian is little more than a big schoolgirl; when she is not working she is playing—or talking—hockey, cycling, golfing, or drinking tea—which is invariably made very weak (this is one of Girton's unwritten laws); she is blessed with an excellent appetite; she goes to bed early and she gets up early, and there you have the average Varsity woman in a nutshell.

It is astonishing what a very little people know about Girton. Our foremost college for women, though indisputably an institution of much note, has been but seldom written about, in addition to which I am assured, by those who ought to know, that the few articles that have been penned on Girton are mainly

incorrect. I may be pardoned, then—being but a man, and therefore somewhat of an outsider—for venturing thus to describe Girton life, when I explain that it has been put to me that I may be able to clear away some of the existing misapprehensions relating to the conduct of the college, as well as upset a few of the fallacies regarding the way women undergraduates live and move and have their being.

Girton College is a mile from the village from which it takes its name, and rather more than a mile and a half out of Cambridge, on the Huntingdon Road. It stands in a somewhat isolated position, the nearest dwellings being a farmhouse and the steam laundry which Newnham and Girton have built between them for mutual use. The college is somewhat extraordinary in shape; in fact one would require to be deeply versed in architectural terms in order to describe it at all correctly. The reason why Girton has the appearance of having been thrown together is that the original building has been added to in a spasmodic way from time to time in order to provide fresh accommodation for increasing numbers of students.

The college is descended from a very humble ancestor. On October 16, 1869, a hired house, for the reception of six students, was opened at Hitchin. In 1873 the establishment was removed to Girton, and that part which is now to be distinguished by the darker red of its brick was the trunk that threw out branches in all directions as years went on. Girton is now a rambling erection of imposing proportions, and, on account of its character as an educational pioneer, one that will in the dim future make an interesting happy hunting-ground for the archæologist and his chisel.

In addition to over a century of students, a large staff of dons reside at the college, including the mistress, vice-mistress, junior bursar, and seven resident lecturers. Besides the necessary accommodation for all these, there are included in the block of buildings twelve lecture-rooms, library, reading-room, hall, chemical laboratory, gymnasium and music-room. The building of a swimming-bath is also contemplated.

Each student has two rooms, these being connected by folding doors. Residence at Newnham is said to be cheaper than at Girton, and yet Girton—on paper—appears to make no inordinate charges for main-

tenance and education. The fees come to £35 per term, and this sum is an inclusive one, there being at a ladies' college few of those extra disbursements that are too often a sore trial to the needy undergraduate. Speaking roughly, a career at Girton costs about £100 a year. And when it is taken

into consideration that the establishment is self-supporting, it must be admitted that these terms are exceedingly moderate.

In the matter of visitors there are certain formalities which are strictly adhered to. Before a student can be seen the visitor must hand two cards to the portress, one for the inspection of the mistress, and the other, in the event of the mistress raising no objection, for presentation to the student. And here I should like to mention that the undergraduate—hapless man!—is not encouraged to pay calls at Girton. Of course a brother may

visit a sister in her rooms, or a cousin a cousin, but the mere ordinary caller is treated to a somewhat stiff reception in the music-room. The undergraduate who drops in on a Girton acquaintance, in hopes of getting some tea, is, therefore, likely to come away disappointed.

A visit of a few hours' duration to Girton



MAIN ENTRANCE.

leaves a vague impression of endless corridors, bright little rooms, green lawns, and packed bookshelves on one's mind. Personally, I was shown everything—even the view from the top of the tower. Imagine going up a church tower—the staircase of Girton's is quite as narrow as that to be found in the average belfry—and coming, instead of to bell-chambers, to doors with names on them!

"You don't mean to say that girls live up here?" I asked in some amazement. "Oh yes," was the reply, "they do when the college is very full. There's only one here

Whilst speaking of this same holiday term, I learned that those girls who take modern languages "are supposed to travel during the 'Long,'" a fact which is highly appreciated by the Girtonians whom it affects, inasmuch as it is an argument which can be brought to bear on paterfamilias with tremendous emphasis. Many of the students make up what are called "reading parties," which parties take cottages, or go up the river, or in other ways put in a few weeks' "real hard work" in each other's company. Indeed it may safely be computed that an industrious Girton girl gets through more



GIRTON COLLEGE.

now, though." But as my visit took place during the Long Vacation term (a special month, that is, during the Long Vacation—which about thirty per cent. only of the students keep) it was not very strange to find one girl only in Girton tower. At the same time I could not help expressing an opinion that chasing up and down a spiral staircase numbers of times during the day could hardly be considered one of the advantages of Girton's curriculum. But I was assured that "they don't mind it a bit," which is, to my thinking, a very fortunate circumstance.

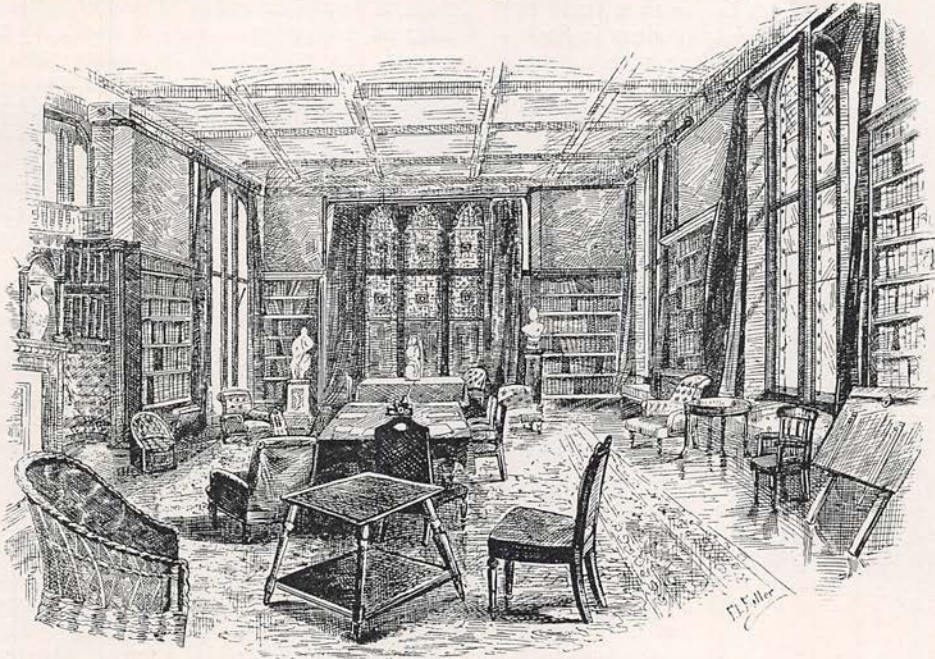
solid reading in a term than the average 'Varsity man does in a year. But then the 'Varsity man's lordly and luxurious manner of life is responsible for much of his idleness. In a college each man has a "gyp" or a scout. At Girton there are two gyps to a corridor. The gyp, the tips he expects, and his cupboard deprivations, are among the sorrows which make the 'Varsity man's purse weep. At Girton the female gyp is a housemaid, whose honesty is only equal to the surprise she exhibits should one of the students make her a present.

The all-pervading athletic spirit that pre-

vails at Girton prevents the students from becoming blue-stockings or book-worms. The "fresher," on entering the college, is invited to join the hockey, tennis, and cricket clubs, and I may safely say that only those girls who are physically unfit to indulge in more or less violent exercise abstain from taking advantage of the invitation in question. Hockey is undoubtedly the great recreation at Girton, as it is at the sister college. The hockey uniform consists of a red blouse, blue and red tie, and appropriately short skirt. The game is played with great enthusiasm, and immense is the desire to be chosen to represent Girton

whenever a reasonable excuse affords them opportunity so to do. The football has not yet been permitted to enter Girton's select preserves, but there is no saying how long this ban will last.

The incomings and outgoings of the Girtonian are taken due note of. The powers that be are always aware of her whereabouts. For, let it be known, there is a book, and in this book each student has to put her initials three times a day—between eight a.m. and nine a.m., between noon and three, and between six and seven in the evening. Thus, were a fair girl undergraduate to run away, her absence would



THE LIBRARY.

v. Newnham in the cup ties. The tennis courts are excellently kept, but the state of the cricket pitch would arouse the scorn of any properly brought up schoolboy. "But then," as we were informed quite apologetically, "we only *play* at playing cricket." The bicycle is very much in evidence at Girton, as a glance into the recently erected cycle-shed fully testifies. Every girl who can screw the necessary funds out of paterfamilias becomes a victim to the craze as soon as possible after she enters the college—if, that is, she does not bring a machine along with her dictionaries, as is often the case. Thus horsed, the Girtonians scour the Fen country in small bands, and take trips into Cambridge

be quickly discovered. If anyone wishes to be absent all day it is necessary for her to obtain an *absit* from the mistress.

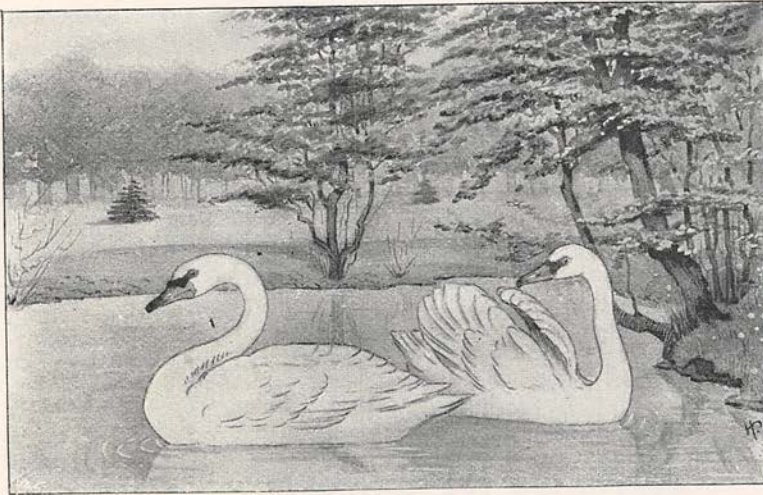
The fire brigade is one of Girton's most popular institutions. Every able-bodied girl belongs to it, for the Girtonian, classical though she may be in many of her aspirations, has as yet evinced little desire to emulate Dido's example and submit herself to a roasting—voluntary or otherwise. But to the brigade. It is a very well officered brigade. There is a head captain, corresponding to the chief officer of the M.F.B.; there are three captains, and there are seven sub-captains. The rest are ordinary rank-and-file firewomen, such inter-

mediaries as superintendents, forewomen and engineers being considered unnecessary with so many captains on the staff. There is a practice once a week with hose, engine, buckets, etc. About three times during each term there is an "alarm." This is the uncomfortable feature about the Girton fire brigade, although the members apply to such occasions that ordinary mundane adjective "jolly." Acting on instructions received from the head captain (the only person who is able to dress for the occasion), a number of sub-captains go round with policemen's rattles calling out "Alarm!" Without a moment's hesitation, garbed fully or only partially, the student has to turn out. She may be in bed; she may be deep in Sophocles; she may be wrestling with a matter

saries in the shape of a desk, carpet, couple of chairs, table, fender and fire-irons, coal-scuttle, bedroom furniture, and cupboard. By a nun a couple of rooms with all these things in them would doubtless be considered sinfully luxurious. The Girtonian, however, soon sets to work to embellish and fill with bric-à-brac what is to be her academical home for the next three years. When her friends receive word that she is proceeding to Cambridge, come October, they present her with a store of dainty knick-knacks, useful and ornamental, and with the aid of these she fills up all her bare nooks and corners. As the rooms are somewhat limited in dimensions, it would be neither wise nor polite to attempt to swing a cat in them. I had myself the misfortune to collide with a

decorated flower-jar, which, with a feminine eye for effect, rather than for safety, had been placed on a stool just where it was most likely to be overturned by an awkward masculine. But the accident was received with a smile surely as sweet as the scent of the Girton roses!

It may now be well to describe a day at Girton, with its pleasant mixture of work and play. The following specimen of the Girton



"JOHN" AND "EMMA."

metaphysical; she may even (though this is unlikely) be playing something frivolous on her piano—her occupation must be left on the instant and she must fly to her post. Then an imaginary fire is put out, the hose is wound up, the engine put to bed, the firewomen complimented or reprimanded according to the degree of smartness they have exhibited, and so the impromptu drill comes to an end. We believe we are correct in saying that there has never yet been a fire at Girton, but it is quite right to take such precautions. It is also very satisfactory to note that there are special exits in case of fire, and fire-proof doors at the end of each corridor.

The Girtonian has this advantage over the male undergraduate, she does not have to pay down a lump sum for furniture on entering the college, which provides bare neces-

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It may now be well to describe a day at Girton, with its pleasant mixture of work and play. The following specimen of the Girton vernacular may surprise some of those good folks who have hitherto been under the impression that when a girl goes to college she immediately assumes the manner and diction of a learned woman.

"Well," said my informant, "we get up when we like. Lots of people get up and work before breakfast, and they take it in turns to make tea. When it is your turn the other girls come in, and you make them tea. Breakfast is from eight to nine. What do we have? Oh, ordinary things, you know. Then we work all the morning, and lunch is to be had between twelve and three, hot lunch between one and half-past. After that we play tennis, or golf, or hockey, or ride out on our bicycles. Oh yes, quite a third of the girls have bicycles. Then, if you're here for it, comes afternoon

tea. Is that the great hour of the day? Oh, dear no! 'Tray' is the best part of the day. Oh, I'm coming to that presently. Well, afternoon tea is to be had in several ways. A servant brings round a big pot of tea, and you pour yourself out a cup—if you are working, that is to say. Then you don't have any trouble. In the summer girls are very fond of making their own tea on the lawn. The college provide tea, you know, and we provide cakes, biscuits, etc. Well, after tea we either read or do something else. There's always something on—hockey chiefly in the winter; tennis, bicycling, cricket and golf in the summer. Only a few girls play golf. The links are not proper links, just a few holes. When all the girls are 'up' there are two 'halls,' one at six, one at seven. After hall we have coffee-parties. Then at nine or nine-thirty comes 'tray.'

I was beginning to feel anxious about the nature of this mysterious function called "tray." The explanation was soon forthcoming however.

"Well, you must know that in the evening your gyp brings you a tray. On this is tea, coffee, or cocoa—you can have which you like. As it's very unsociable to take 'tray' by yourself, you say to another girl, or to six other girls if you like, 'Come and have "tray" with me.' Then they bring their things, you boil the water, and you all have 'tray' together. Then you go to bed about half-past ten or eleven. Midnight oil? Oh no! Very few girls sit up. We get up too early to be able to sit up late. There, that's a day. Oh, I haven't told you how we arrange to be quiet. There are no rules made, but it is understood between ourselves that certain hours in the day are to be held sacred to work. They are called 'silence hours.' Well, we agree between ourselves not to bang doors, nor to sing, nor to whistle, nor do anything that will disturb anyone between nine and one in the morning, three and half-past six in the afternoon, and

eight to nine in the evening. During those hours we do not play our pianos either. Now d'you understand?"

Girtonians are well provided with literature. The library—which is dedicated to the late Dowager Lady Stanley of Alderley, one of the college's greatest benefactresses—is stocked with a large number of representative works, works upon which the dust is never allowed to lie. The lecture-rooms are similar in appearance to those in the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, plain rooms only, provided with chairs and tables, on the tables the familiar blotting-pads. The hall is the most handsome room in the college. On its walls are ranged the portraits of those persons—chiefly ladies—whose donations



A COSY CORNER IN A GIRTON ROOM.

have done so much towards making Girton what it is.

But the pleasantest part of my July visit was spent out-of-doors. In the large quadrangle, shown on page 348, tennis is played. To the right of the college is the hockey ground, behind it the cricket and golf grounds, and the pond, whereon sail two majestic swans entitled "John" and "Emma," the former having been presented to Girton by St. John's College, Cambridge, and the other by Emmanuel. There is an abundance of space wherein to roam about without leaving the Girton grounds; in fact you can go for all the walk you require by following a woodland path which runs all round the college, and is overhung by thick

foliage most of the way. Through a wicket-gate in the far corner of the grounds you can walk out on to the Huntingdon Road and thus avoid a stately exit by means of the drive.

I do not intend to touch on Girton's intellectual triumphs in this article. I have penned my way so far merely with the object of giving the impressions I received during an afternoon visit. To those who wish to compete, I should say, however, Girton offers a budget of scholarships. No student is allowed to enter before she is eighteen, those now resident varying between eighteen and three-and-twenty years of age. There are rather over a hundred Girtonians at present on the books of the college. Since the college was founded almost six hundred

students have received instruction under its classic roof. Of these, three hundred and forty-four have obtained honours, according to the Cambridge University standard, and between fifty and sixty have passed examinations qualifying for the ordinary B.A. degree. The majority of the students take posts as mistresses in our larger schools when they leave Girton; the specially distinguished ones stay on at Girton as dons. I quitted Girton wiser than I entered it. I saw that there the far-famed blue-stocking is non-existent; that the muscles are cultivated quite as much as the brain, and that the students seem to be profoundly contented with their lot, each one being blessed, apparently, with that truly enviable possession, a sound mind in a sound body.

