

AL/1810

HILL SIDE,  
CHESTERTON ROAD,  
CAMBRIDGE.

April 6<sup>th</sup> /87

Dear Mr. Fawcett

I have been interested in  
reading Miss Davies' letter, which  
you forwarded for our information. It  
is now some years since I discussed  
with her the question to which it  
refers: hence I have no reason to  
be surprised that she has forgotten the  
grounds on which I objected to make the  
existing Little's compulsory on women  
for such an academic education. But  
she has certainly continued to forget  
them very completely. I never  
dreamt that the Little's was or could  
be a serious burden on students of the

ability and energy of Miss Scott or  
Miss Rickett: indeed I have always  
hoped that students of this class might  
often make their education more comprehensive  
by preparing for two Triposes, as Miss  
Rickett actually did. My objection

to making the Little's compulsory is of  
an entirely different kind. I do not  
conceive preparation for the Little's as a  
normal part of the work of independent  
preparation for Honours. It ought to be  
passed by such students before they  
come up, or at entrance - or, latest,  
at the end of the first term: so that  
its real importance is in relation to the  
previous course of study - generally  
speaking, the school course - which it  
is designed to test and control. Now  
it is admitted by those who approve as

well as those who attack our present  
Little's that it has an important effect  
in encouraging classical education in boys'  
schools, and that it proportionally  
tends to depress into an inferior position  
the 'modern sides' of our great public  
schools, and the schools that are  
endeavouring to develop the modern  
system. This effect on the  
education of boys I regard as mistaken  
and regrettable: and for this reason  
I have continually tried, whenever  
opportunity has offered, to alter the  
Little's. It would have been the  
grossest inconsistency if I had assisted  
in impeding <sup>on</sup> the school-education  
<sup>at a</sup> critical period of their development,  
of girls, of a burden which I was  
trying to remove from the school-  
education of boys. This would,

known, have been done if Miss Davies  
had had her way: and I may add that  
it would have been done, so far as  
the University is concerned, inadvertently  
and without deliberate intention: since

I do not believe that the members  
of the University desire of exercising  
on girls' schools the same kind  
of pressure in the direction of classics, which  
they exercise on boys' schools, have  
ever been more than a comparatively  
small minority. If I am

wishtaken in this view — if, when the  
question of <sup>giving</sup> the degree to women comes  
before the University it deliberately  
determines, with a full consciousness  
of the effect it will produce, to impose  
upon them the present classical little —  
why then I shall of course accept

the situation, and propose to modify the <sup>conv</sup> Newnham course accordingly. But I

do not expect this result; and I have always been desirous that the University should not slide inadvertently (as might easily have happened in the earlier stages of the movement) into a position that I do not think it would ever deliberately take up. And

in this aim I have succeeded - so far, that is, as the influence of my own work has extended.

When Miss Davies speaks of "London and other Universities" who have opened their course to women under the same conditions as men, she ignores the one parallel case: viz. that of Oxford; - where a <sup>plan</sup> ~~course~~ substantially the same as that which I have advocated

has been adopted, on similar grounds.

I do not believe that Oxford any more than Cambridge will ever deliberately impose Latin and Greek as a condition of the academic education of Women.

This question, however, is not yet "within the range of practical politics": since it would be on all grounds unwise to press for admission to the degree at ~~present~~ <sup>present</sup> the University. When the time comes to consider the question, I shall acquiesce in any decision to which the University may come with regard to it, after I have advocated my view to the best of my ability. Meanwhile I am quite content with the present situation.

I am

Yours very sincerely

Henry Sidgwick