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Article Title: Esther Gunnison: A Nebraskan at Oxford, 1920-1921

Full Citation: Dolores Gunnerson, "Esther Gunnison: A Nebraskan at Oxford, 1920-1921," *Nebraska History* 59 (1978): 1-30.

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1979EGunnison.pdf>

Date: 10/3/2014

Article Summary: Esther Gunnison was among 24 American "ladies" to enter Oxford during the academic year of 1920-1921. This was the first time women were admitted and allowed to work toward formal degrees on the same basis as men. The article is a smoothly edited story told through Esther Gunnison's letters home and her journal. [Note the Gunnison / Gunnarson / ... name is spelled in several different ways by the family]

Cataloging Information:

Names: Esther Gunnison, Alfred Gunnarson, Sophia (Johnson) Gunnarson, Frances Tobey, Sir Gilbert Murray, Alice Hardman, Phillip Means, Joe Gunnarson, Justin T Kingdon, Elaine Haggie, A J Carlyle, Mrs Crocker, F Treadwell Smith, Bertha Johnson, F T Smith, Gilbert Murray, Miss Flockhart, Mrs Hersey, Arthur Henderson, Miss Bensen, Miss Stroiberg, Frank Morley, Miss Morgan, Mrs Whitmarsh, Mrs Crump, John William Davis, Mrs Whitmarsh, Sir George and Lady Dashwood, Miss Dashwood, Alice, Lady Tynmouth, Rev Mr Inge, Vice-Chancellor Tarnell, Miss Burrows, Gilbert Murray, Miss Bixilius, Sir Walter Raleigh, Robert Bridges, Mr Wade Grey, Dr McLane, Mrs McLane, Miss Werner, Miss Oldfelt, John Masefield, Frances Quillfeldt, Hervor Quillfeldt, Paul R Gunnison

Photographs / Images: Esther Gunnison, 1919, at Greeley State Teachers' College, as Portia in Shakespear's *The Merchant of Venice*; Esther Gunnison on board the *Laplant* enroute to England; Proprietress Alice Hardman in front of the Shamrock Tea Rooms; Society of Oxford Home-Students certificate; Jesus College, Oxford; Magdalen Tower, Oxford



Esther Gunnison (1919) at Greeley (Colorado) State Teachers' College, costumed to appear as Portia in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice.

**ESTHER GUNNISON:
A NEBRASKAN AT OXFORD, 1920-1921**

Edited by Dolores Gunnerson

INTRODUCTION

In February, 1921, the American Club at Oxford published a list of the American members of the University in residence—more than 200 persons in all.¹ The men on the roster, some of whom were to become famous, included many Rhodes Scholars.² Appended was a list of 24 American “ladies,” for in that academic year of 1920-1921 Oxford was, for the first time, admitting women to work toward formal degrees on the same basis as men, and these two dozen American females had crossed the ocean to take advantage of the opportunity. Among them was Esther Gunnison (1893-1972), who had already obtained an A.B. in English literature from Greeley (Colorado) State Teachers' College, having financed her education largely through her own efforts as a teacher in rural schools.

Of Swedish immigrant extraction, Esther Gunnison was the daughter of Alfred and Sophia (Johnson) Gunnarson,³ farmers living north of Aurora in Hamilton County, Nebraska, an area settled mainly by Scandinavians. Attractive, conventional in manner but charmingly so, Miss Gunnison was both a wage-earning realist and eloquently idealistic: In her senior year at college she had been overwhelmingly elected president of the student body after making wholly sincere campaign speeches in defense of “democracy.”

As an older, mature student at Greeley, Esther had come to know personally a Miss Frances Tobey, dean of women and professor of English literature, who had already studied at Oxford on the restricted basis previously allowed women, and had traveled extensively on the Continent. She had arranged to spend a sabbatical leave in 1920-1921 studying toward an Oxford degree, which she eventually obtained. By accompanying Miss Tobey abroad, Esther acquired an informed tutor and companion who could introduce her to interesting people and places, thus enabling her to enjoy an experience comparable to

that of young aristocrats for whom a *Wanderjahr* was part of education.

Esther Gunnison arrived at Oxford fresh from a job as translator of Scandinavian languages for the Veterans' Bureau in Washington, D.C. Detained in the capital too long for matriculation in the fall term, she nevertheless became a member of the Oxford community through the Society of Home Students, organized long before to coordinate the maintenance and instruction of women whose backgrounds differed from that of typical British schoolgirls. At the Oxford of 1920 Miss Gunnison found an exciting atmosphere of intellectual challenge, as well as an open forum for political controversy that suited her personal taste and American background. She arrived in time, also, to see numerous historical and literary shrines that met her romantic expectations because they were still enhanced by the beauty of country settings not yet blighted by industry.

In the case of women coming to Oxford in 1920 there remained, too, a legacy of concern for the development of those attributes considered essentially feminine by the "enlightened Victorian" principals who, with lady-like but sustained pressures, had gradually been furthering since 1873 the assimilation of women into the university community. Whether or not Esther Gunnison knew of their efforts that had, indeed, made her matriculation possible, her own femininity and ideals of social service were in complete accord with the desire of those pioneers to turn out women who "could make a home happy," and with their expectations of students as expressed by one of the earliest woman principals: "I want none to go for the sake of a pleasant life, . . . none, merely for self culture, but that they may do better service for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate." (See letter, May 22, 1921.)

Following is a selection of Esther Gunnison's letters and diary entries, written during her year abroad. Diary entries are displayed in smaller type:

THE LETTERS AND DIARY

November 5, 1920

Dear Jim:⁴

This is the seventh day of my voyage, and I am about 2,220 miles from New York! On Monday we land at Southampton, and I shall be in Oxford early in the afternoon. Since I wrote you, the *Philadelphia* cancelled sailing and I was transferred to S.S.

Lapland, one of the largest boats of the Red Star Line. The change of plans was fortunate indeed. I was given an excellent stateroom which I occupy alone since my friend is detained because of the serious illness of her mother. The boat is heavily loaded with cargo (there are only about 300 passengers) and sails quite smoothly. Thus far I have not been ill and do not anticipate the jag(?) some unfortunate voyagers have had all the way. One night we had a taste of storm on mid-ocean. Our boat rocked and rolled in every direction and I went to sleep clutching the sides of my berth and listening to the waves beat against my window.

Most of the passengers are French and Belgian with the exception of a half-dozen Britishers. All of them seem to be returning to Europe after a summer in the states. They are a pleasant lot of travelers and seem greatly interested in the "American girl going to Oxford." The young people on board are especially congenial, and I am demanded every afternoon and evening for dancing and deck-games. It is a circus to dance with a French man! Their style defies all laws of gravitation under normal conditions. Imagine what it must be on board a ship!

But I'll begin recounting incidents in Washington where I was pleasantly surprised with the "send-off" given me by [Veterans] Bureau folk. The last day at the office everyone I knew came in to say "bon voyage." There were elevator men, guards, Negro messengers and several higher officials, to say nothing of the dozens of others. The year in Washington has been fine in many ways and I don't regret the excellent experience there. . . .

The stewards, waiters and bell boys are endlessly kind and thoughtful. They fairly stand by one continually and I must say they are more than worth the customary "tip." We breakfast at 8 o'clock (all except me and I prefer to sleep), walk the decks for an hour or more, or play deck tennis until noon. After luncheon I wrap myself in a steamer rug and doze on the sunny deck. . . . We have regular concerts by the ship's orchestra. They are all Belgian and the first violinist looks like this: [A small caricature was drawn in the margin.] That's really a good likeness but doesn't in any way reflect on his playing. I close my eyes when he plays solos and just listen. . . .

After dinner (the meals are great!) I omit dancing for several hours of walking. The moonlit path of waves is magnificent and I

admire the stiff breeze. Usually a young, much-travelled Scotchman joins me. He is an engineer just returned from India and a genuine Viking. He prays for storm, since smooth seas seem to bore him. I have heard him remark a number of times, "Ye know I've a great fancy for the sea when the green waves come walkin' into the boat!" His accent is delightful! We don't agree on anything except "Bobbie" Burns. He swears there is no place in all the world like Aberdeen, Scotland, his home.

I have explored every part of the ship permissible. I had a glimpse of the captain in his cabin and shared candy with the children of the steerage. Today I see one much-soiled little Belgian still hugging the candy box I gave her Monday! The voyage is all perfectly great so far. . . .

We had news of the election on board the ship soon after the results were known in the states. I am surprised that the country should have gone Republican. Of course a Republican administration is inevitable, but I didn't think the women of the country would show such decided colors in favor of the Republican party. . . .⁵ Esther.

139 Woodstock Road, Oxford, England

November 8 [1920]—On S.S. Lapland. For several hours we viewed English shores, mellow in pastelle shades of autumn. The Belgian pianist came to my "lookout" on the deck and we made art comparisons. I accepted the invitation to the orchestra balcony and from the music repertoire selected favorite compositions. . . . Landed at Southampton at 3 p.m. and took boat train to London. Luis Monteiro de Almeda⁶ escorted me [see letter of November 15, 1920]. Left London from Paddington Station at 10:30 and make the acquaintance of Miss Elaine Haggie. Reached Oxford at midnight! I found 139 Woodstock Road and Frances!

*November 9—*At noon, I was introduced to Mrs. Whitmarsh⁷ and the family of students. In the afternoon Frances took me to Christ Church [College]. We visited the Dining Hall, admiring the stairway approach and the collection of portraits in the hall. We were shown the famous old kitchen. We visited also Christ Church Cathedral! Exquisite!

*November 10—*Today I opened a bank account at the Midland Bank. Frances took me to hear Dr. [A. J.] Carlyle's lecture [see diary entry of January 17, 1921]. We spent the evening with Mrs. Crocker and a group of American students, and volunteered to make place cards for the Thanksgiving dinner.

*November 11—*Today we went downtown to Carfax [center of town], where many people are gathered to observe Armistice Day. All is quiet for several minutes—taps follow! We went shopping for woolen clothing and visited the Ashmolean [Museum] Art Collection of Miniatures.⁸ Mr. F. Treadwell Smith called to make arrangements for decorating for Thanksgiving dinner.

*November 13—*Frances takes me to see Mrs. [Bertha] Johnson,⁹ principal of the "home students."¹⁰ I matriculate January 15. Hair shampoo and bath. Mr. F. T. Smith sees us for discussion of Thanksgiving dinner.

*November 14—*Sunday. We attended University services at Christ Church and I have my first glimpse of the procession in scarlet [see diary entry of January 16, 1921].

*November 15—*My first letter from America came today from Paul! Appointment with Mr. Smith at Masonic hall, and tea at 4 o'clock. We hear Gilbert Murray [British

classicist] on the "League of Nations." Unbiased, bigness of vision such as the world needs!

November 15, 1920

My Dear Jim:

It is a week ago since I reached Oxford, but perhaps it might be well to go back a few days in my recounting of events. I wrote you rather hurriedly from the boat, and I believe I explained about my transfer of passage to *S.S. Lapland*....Before landing we sailed for hours along the English coast. We had gone to Cherbourg (France) to leave some of the passengers, then crossed the channel again headed towards Southampton. The water of the channel is green and reminds one of an oil painting, and the English coast just now is splendid in soft pastelle shades of autumn coloring. With the meadows still green beyond the broken lines of trees and hedges, all beyond the channel, the picture is quite wonderful. The day was sunny and bright, which we had not hoped for in England. It was quite as thrilling to go *down* the gangway at Southampton as going up the plank in New York. Of course New York is immeasurably superior to Southampton as a harbor. No doubt the latter was only a small fisherman's village in the past. But I think not until I reached England did I have an overwhelming feeling of love and loyalty for the fine strength and courage and highness of vision that has made those States of ours. I do not mean that I have not always been fired with patriotism, but I have never had the occasion to make comparisons, nor do I feel that I can yet. But away from one's country the loyalty is only strengthened. Let no one dare imply that our States are not immeasurably great!

At Southampton a boat train was waiting just outside the piers so after an examination of luggage we were put on board the kind of train you describe. The straps on my trunk daunted the officer at the place of inspection, so I assured him I wasn't a smuggler, and he didn't open the trunk. A fine young Portuguesean friend of the journey, who was going to London on business before he went to his home in Lisbon, Portugal, volunteered as escort. So we were put into a compart[ment] large enough for a half-dozen, the doors were locked, and a toy whistle sound warned us that we were leaving. We made excellent time in spite of appearances. I went to Oxford via London because all the Britishers on board assured me that was the only possible way. Later I discovered that I could have gone directly, saving three hours, which shows how much some folks know about the

geography of their country. Of course we reached London in a fog, but had no difficulty of any kind. Baggage system here is a joke. When you board a train, you turn things over to a porter who gives you no check of any kind; then you identify your baggage at whatever station you change or stop. So my baggage and I were deposited in a taxi and driven to Paddington Station. . . . Well, I reached 139 Woodstock Road at midnight. I found a fine old street of handsome old houses and gardens and the inevitable maid in conventional dress ready to admit me, and when I awakened a few hours later I looked out upon a new and strange world indeed!

My friend here had made all kinds of pleasant arrangements for me and every one seemed kindly expectant and rather pleased to admit another American. There are eighteen students living here, a fine cosmopolitan group including three Danish girls, a Norwegian lad, a Portuguesan lad, a young South American, another American lady, a group of English girls, an old English gentleman who smokes his pipe, plays chess and calls some people "bally asses," and our hostess. The latter is a real Dickens type of character, who wears stiff brocaded dresses, high white collars, and although not militant is a member of many committees. . . . Oxford as a city is a rare gem! It was founded hundreds of years ago and is romantic in history. It is on the Thames, in a valley with rugged hills in the distance. The buildings are magnificent in architecture and beauty of somberness and setting. Except for main streets the byways are so narrow one walks single file or rides a bicycle instead of driving a Pierce Arrow [automobile]! There are [about] twenty-four colleges here, several fine old cathedrals, other noted places and a city wall.

Students are here from all parts of the world. The Prince of Wales [who became Edward VIII]¹¹ has received his higher education at one of the colleges here, besides noted men of state and of letters. There are about 150 American men, who have been granted Cecil Rhodes scholarships from American universities and only about 25 women from America. I shall have work in several of the colleges under exceptionally prepared instructors. But since I came too late to enroll for this term's work, I am attending lectures, studying the newness of the situation and deciding just what I shall enroll for. Then one of these days I go through a long formal ceremony of matriculation with only a few others. It will be a solemn occasion I am told for

it's a new thing in the history of the city—this admitting women for scholastic work. We are required to wear on all occasions academic cap and gown. Most of the young fellows carry their cap and wear the gown as a muffler! They are red-blooded all right and don't impress me as "sisseys." . . .

Last night we heard an English Professor [Sir Gilbert Murray] give a summary of the League of Nations. It is the finest, most unbiased discussion I have heard from anyone. As a Britisher he seemed to understand and sympathize with the present American situation as far as the League is concerned. . . . No doubt it is time I should close. I could write on all day and perhaps still not have given you a correct impression of things. I do know, however, that in spite of rain and not-over-warm houses, I have a wonderful year in store for me. Living conditions are comparatively comfortable and generally prices are less for all sorts of wearing apparel as well as board and room. Besides, we have tea every afternoon which is a supper in itself. Watch me grow "portly"! . . .

Your sister, Esther

P.S. The American students are having a real American Thanksgiving dinner. I am invited to act on the reception and the decorating committees. E.

November 16—This morning Frances took me to Ifley, charming little village with its famous church of St. Mary the Virgin. We study and love Norman architecture and walk back following the Thames. We went to Exeter Chapel in the afternoon to admire the William Morris tapestry, designed by Burne-Jones! Tea at Fullers given by Miss Flockhart, Cornell girl. I miss Frances tonight.

November 17—Today we have taken an eight-mile walk through lovely villages, fording the Thames at Bablockhythe, where we had tea.

November 18—Another excursion to Wallingford, Benson and Ewelme where we visited the church with Alice Chaucer's tomb and almshouse. Most exquisite landscape of downs and distances! We walked back to Wallingford where we had tea at the Royal George. Committee meeting for Thanksgiving dinner, when we decided on autumn foliage for decoration.

November 19—Frances and I selected material for place cards. Mrs. Hersey and little Elizabeth came to help in designing. In the afternoon we visited Magdalen College, preparatory school, dining hall, and charming walks of Magdalen—loveliest of colleges! In the evening we attended the first dinner given by Oxford University Labor Party Club as an annual celebration. Mr. Arthur Henderson [British labor leader and statesman] gave the address of the evening—a comprehensive view of the principles of the Labor Party.

November 20—A lecture on Shelley, tea with Frances at the students' common room, and we attend the Tradesmen's Exhibition.

November 21—We attended services at Manchester chapel this morning. Miss Bengston and I took a bus to Edgington and walked on to Forest Hill to see sunset, lovely misty valleys and hazy distances. We stopped to visit the parish church where Milton was married, walked on to Stanton St. John's and Edgington. Tea with dear woman who played the harp as we sat before the fire enjoying the warmth of the little home.

November 21, 1920

My Dear Jim: . . .

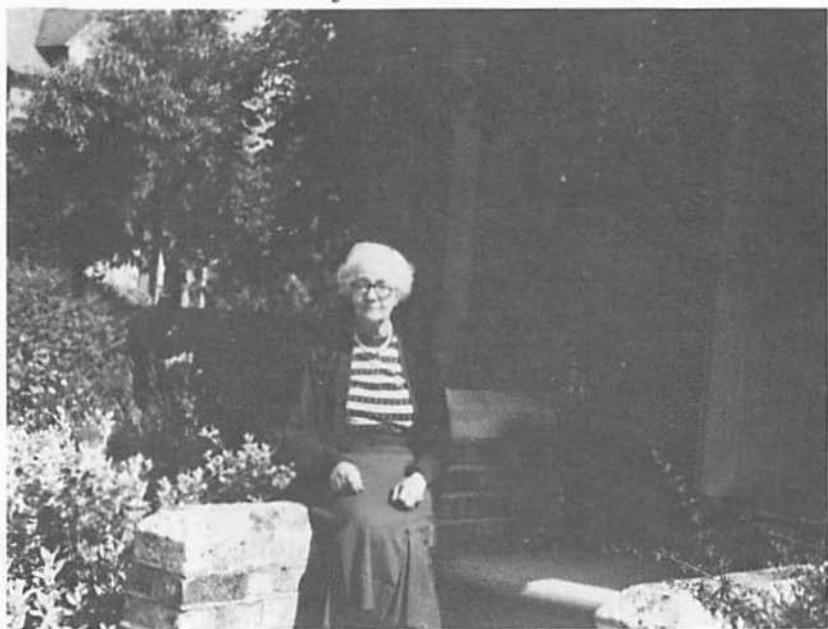
During the past week we have taken a number of walking excursions, walking an average of six or eight miles daily. It is the hamlets that hold a strange fascination for Americans, for they are so unlike anything we have in America by way of villages one doesn't know what to make of them at first. . . . I am looking up everything within twenty miles that is connected in any way with the writers of the past. And literary shrines are abundant! Yesterday we walked through a fog so dense we scarcely found our way, climbing about four miles to the highest lookout nearby. Fortunately the atmosphere cleared and we had a wonderful view of Oxfordshire.

But the destination of our climb was a church built in 1200 with a famous old bell tower very much like the towers of the old Spanish missions in California. I was especially interested because the church happens to be one attended by the poet Milton. . . . The little church yard full of moss-covered tombstones with quaint epitaphs hardly discernible are always full of interest; one discovers the ideals and the principles of the people of the age represented in the historic inscription on old tombs. Usually all the virtues of the deceased are mentioned together with his limitations. . . . Well—I am making the acquaintance of a lot of colleges and getting a survey of the work I am about to begin. There is enough to choose from—the difficulty lies in choosing wisely. And if by any chance in the world I prove to be a scholar of any special promise, unlimited recognition will be made. It is a sort of sifting of intellects—the rarest gems being a treasure that receives special treatment. But I can't hope for anything unusual. The greatest majority of students are men who have been selected from hundreds of scholars. Of course a number of them are sent from families of wealth and culture, but the red-blood of the "varsity" are the American scholarship men—lawyers, engineers, and other professions being represented. By the way, the Italian Crown Prince is here now for his higher education.¹² The women are permitted to take the same courses as the men, but the system differs in special instruction. In other words, since the school has just opened its doors to women, the men come first in everything.

In two weeks our six weeks vacation begins. Everyone is expected to leave Oxford then to do research work elsewhere and independently. My friend and I will be in London. . . . No doubt



Esther Gunnison (left) on board the Lapland enroute to England. Below: Proprietress Alice Hardman in front of the Shamrock Tea Rooms, 1955. Mrs. Hardman helped operate the establishment while Esther Gunnison was at Oxford.



there will be a difference from the hamlets of England! Of course we'll visit Parliament. I hope to hear something there about the Irish question.¹³ The Labor party here is strongly in sympathy with Ireland; I have heard some hot, keen discussions on the subject from M.P.'s who have come to Oxford to address the University Labor Club. It strikes me the Britishers can say very little to us about dissension in American politics these days. . . .

The weather has not been bad thus far, fortunately, since England does not include furnaces in her development of civilization. A fire in the grate is supposed to warm even the largest room in the homes. Of course we make allowance for the fuel shortage and walk ourselves warm! . . . Your Sister, Esther.

November 23—Misses Bensen, Stroiberg and I went down town this forenoon returning via Mansfield College. Wonderful day! In the afternoon Frances and I went to Oriel College, visiting the dining hall, especially interesting with the crests of famous families. We visited lovely Merton and Corpus Christi. . . .

November 25—Thanksgiving Day. A beautiful day for our Thanksgiving celebration. We had services at Mansfield Chapel—lively patriotic music from the pipe organ, an inspiring sermon, and "America" in closing. In the afternoon we arranged lovely decorations for the dinner; our dinner was very successful—160 real Americans present! I sat between Mr. Frank Morley and Mr. Smith.

November 26—Today Frances, Miss Morgan and I went to North and South Hinkseys, finding the lovely setting of Matthew Arnold's "The Scholar-Gypsy" and "Perseus" [?]. Frances read them aloud when we came home.

December 4—Saw "Abraham Lincoln" by English players with Frances, Misses Morgan, Ivan, and Mrs. Whitmarsh. Tea with the latter at the Cadena.

December 6—Frances and I arrived in London at noon. We were sent by Red Triangle to Abbotsford Hotel.

December 7—We went to Westminster this morning, crossing the Westminster bridge and viewing Parliament across the Thames. We walked back to the abbey—beautiful, wonderful! Saw the resting place of the Unknown Soldier, still covered with floral tributes. We passed the Cenotaph. In the afternoon we attended the Oxford-Cambridge rugby game.

December 9—Today we lost each other in the tube going to Golders Green for the afternoon with Mrs. Crump and a small group of American students. . . .

December 10—At St. Martin's today we saw Galsworthy's "Skin Game."

December 11—Today we visited the National Art Gallery: wonderful Italian masterpieces hold our interest. We heard a lecture on "The British School." Luncheon above the pleasant shop on Devonshire. Mr. and Mrs. Hall entertained us with a group of American students to lovely tea at 26, Old Buildings, Lincoln's Inn Chambers, and a visit to Record Office. Charming, delightful afternoon full of many new, historic interests. Document, seals, crests of royalty, and *Domesday Book*.¹⁴ Evening at Lyceum. Lovely Russian ballet. Mme. Karsinova and Corps and Max Homburg.

December 13—Again to National Art Gallery where we heard of the Dutch Masters. This afternoon we saw "The Knight of the Burning Pestle." Delicious fun and variety; interesting stage effects and costuming.

December 14—We hear a lecture today at the National Art Gallery on the Florentine artists. Frances and I agree the sincere devotion expressed in old Italian art is lovely in comparison with modern subjects. A letter from mother! This afternoon we were entertained at the American embassy, 29 Chesham Place. Mr. and Mrs. [John William] Davis (American Ambassador to Great Britain) are genial.

December 14, 1920

My Dear Jim:

Lest history accumulate too greatly for recording, I shall write you after a first week in London. . . . Well—we left Oxford rather early the first Monday morning of the vacation (which is referred to as “vac” here) and spent about two hours enroute to London town. We had been referred to a comfortable modest hotel which we found suited us quite well, being in a quiet section, yet near enough the heart of the city to be convenient. We pay about the same price for living expenses here as we do in Oxford, about \$45.00 per month.

And lest I forget it, let me tell you about our breakfasts, which are typically English. Things go something like this: we are greeted by a head waiter who turns us over to a maid in black and white. She always says the same thing: “Mornin’ ’m. (’m means madam in Cockney.) Norsty wuther.” (The latter is true, so I agree.) “Coffee or tea ’m?” Everyone drinks tea for breakfast except me. Then, “will ye have porridge this mornin’?” Following that the maid names three or four kinds of fish and I don’t yet know any species she has named, so I look wise and say “Yes, bring me herring,” and sure enough I get a herring excellently well prepared.

The remains of the herring being removed, I am questioned if I prefer “bacon an’ heggs or bacon an’ homlette,” so I do my duty by the former. Then the inevitable orange marmalade and sweet butter is served with rolls and we depart while the maid says she “’opes we’ll have a fine day.” Do I eat all that for breakfast? I’ll have to admit that I am hungry enough to eat anything in the mornings and find the English breakfasts quite OK.

The day after we arrived we crossed Westminster bridge to see Parliament from the opposite side of the Thames. We saw also a group of old royal palaces in the vicinity, and passed the flower-decorated “Cenotaph” shortly before we crossed the bridge. We recrossed the Thames to stop at Westminster Abbey—the hall of fame and burial place of poets, artists, musicians, scientists, royalty, etc.... The second day after we came, we had a London fog. The day seemed like a continuation of night with a weird sort of mysticism of dull shifting lights—grey, green, red and gold. Traffic moved slowly, stopping at times. We walked downtown to Trafalgar Square, where we stood for almost an hour admiring the unusual effect of

lights coming from many directions and focusing on the Nelson Monument. The following day was clear and perfect. . . .

One day last week an old London family entertained us at their famous home—one of the Inns of Court at one time used by Cromwell. . . . Today we were entertained at the home of the American Ambassador and Mrs. Davis. I can't begin to tell you how many liveried men "showed us in." One opened the door before we rang, even, one took our umbrellas, one our wraps, one showed us up to the living room, one at the head of the stairs showed us to the living room and finally there, no accidents having happened, one solemn old "stiff" asked us our names a half-dozen times in order to announce us properly. Well—then we shook hands with the ambassador and his lady and were introduced to several other guests trying to seem "at home" and had tea. In spite of the number of men it took to bring us properly to our host and hostess, we found everything unassuming and American. They were interested, it seemed, in my venturing forth to Oxford. Going out was simpler. I pretended I didn't see the army of servants although I got my coat "put on" and my umbrella handed to me, and the door opened by three different individuals. Believe me, I don't envy them. No doubt they are as bored as they look!

The long evenings we spend indoors usually reviewing a lot of new literature for a preliminary basis of the Oxford courses. Fortunately there is always a cheery fire and the large living room is warm. Every one else plays chess! An old English doctor staying here wants to talk about anything I am willing to tell him about myself, it seems. He compliments me on the ambition that brought me to Oxford, seeming to think it an unusual one. English people seem to think it takes much "gritting of teeth" for a woman to come here alone in the first place, and to study in the second, for as they remark, Oxford courses are "stiff." I don't fear—let them be difficult. . . . Your sister, Esther

December 16—We went to Art Gallery today to hear about the German school of artists, but did not remain long. Frances took me home in taxi, and I spent the day in bed. Dear, sweet Frances made me "comfy" and happy.

December 17— . . . We went downtown to enjoy charming windows in holiday splendor, and eager shoppers. This evening carol singers came to our window of the Abbotsford.

December 19—We attended services at St. Paul's Cathedral. Beautiful, Romanesque architecture of interior and exterior. Impressive memorial to the Duke of Wellington. Found the Holman Hunt picture, the "Light of the World." We had dinner from long stiff benches in old "Cheshire Cheese Inn," and were reminded of Dr. Johnson and Dickens. (Wine Court outside—one of Dickens' scenes in *A Tale of Two Cities*)....

December 22—We went early this morning to Hampstead Heath. The day has been

perfect! We walked through the village until we reached the heath, passing the little pond where Shelley sailed paper boats with the children! What tantalizing mystery beyond the hill hiding the heath from our approach! What mysticism of paths and vales of the rugged heath! Gorse is still in bloom. We took the Spaniards' Road to Spaniards' Inn, then crossed to the village with the Pitt house and old Bull and Bush Inn. We returned, passing Jack Straw's Castle and followed a path to the "Vale of Health." Sweet, lovely Hampstead Heath, full of romance of inspiration for creators of art and poetry, and many who happily go from London to the heath for a holiday! We hope to return soon. . . .

December 25—We went to Christmas morning services at the Foundling Home and sat in the balcony near the children. We saw them have their dinners and played with them during their festival of crackers, potatoes and meat, plum pudding, fruit and copper pennies. In the afternoon we went to Westminster Abbey for beautiful afternoon musical service. Before dinner we walked along the embankment. The Thames was lovely in mist and lights! . . .

December 26—We went to Gray's Inn Chapel services this forenoon. In the afternoon we took a long drive through southeast London to Chislehurst. Lovely landscape and villages. . . .

December 28—We went to the Tower this morning. We saw the White Tower, Bloody Tower, and the Jewel Rooms. In the White Tower we visited the old Norman Chapel, banqueting halls, council chamber, cells, dungeons, and arsenal. We saw block and axes of terrible executions of past ages. We went to the room. . . in which Raleigh was confined twelve years during which time he wrote the *History of the World*. Above his room was that of the little princes who were murdered by their uncle¹⁵ . . . The jewel room, with its wealth of gold and jewels, compels one to wonder that so much wealth should be kept in store for the coronations of Kings and Queens! Interesting structure of the Tower, moat and courtyards. We saw *Peter Pan* at the St. James this afternoon and sympathize with the little lad who will not grow up.

December 29—Today we went to Sloane Square and found many literary associations—Jane Austen, Shelley, Miss Mitford, Edgar Allen Poe. We went to Brompton Oratory but found it closed; went to Harrod's [Department Store] where Queen Mary did Christmas shopping.

December 28, 1920

My Dear Jim:

Your handsome Christmas gift and letter reached me in London Christmas eve with a great stack of letters and packages from America. You seem, by some rare power of divination, to know exactly what I have wanted this year to go with my Oxford note book. In fact I have gazed longingly at pencils like the precious one you sent me never dreaming I should own one, and behold, like Aladdin, you bring the coveted article! Now picture me, if you please, sitting below a learned dignitary in colossal halls of Oxford flourishing a pencil such as few other students own, while in the meantime I take notes from lectures and think in terms of adoration and appreciation of the sender of such a gift. . . . Christmas eve was impressive as well as festive. Groups of singers had gathered in the streets early in the evening to sing carols. I was impressed with the beauty and eagerness of voices many of which were trained long since no doubt. Chimes of nearby churches blended in solemn unison; bells of distant

cathedrals joined in the exultation of Christmas music and at midnight London re-echoed with caroling!

On the morning of the day following we were awakened by bells ringing everywhere. Thus the day was announced and one could not help feel the spirit of Christmas predominating everywhere. We went to morning services at a famous old roundling home, where four hundred small children sitting either side of the handsome pipe organ presented to the home by Handel, gave the services of the morning consisting largely of carols.

In the afternoon we went to Westminster Abbey where hundreds of people had gathered to hear the boys' choir. The music was exquisite! The high domes of the old abbey [were] fairly filled with the beauty of rich young voices accompanied by the organ. Could the illustrious persons buried in the abbey have awakened to hear the singing, they could have asked for nothing lovelier.

We have had three days of lull compared with the usual London. The day after Christmas, known as "boxing day," is a holiday as well. Today we have our first newspapers for three days. Even Parliament disassembled for those three days; early last week Parliament sat twenty-four hours in one stretch. Still there is no compromise as to Ireland. We pass almost daily Westminster with its buildings of Parliament, its horse guard in gay scarlet regalia at the entrance to the royal palaces, and the closely guarded Downing street where lives Lloyd George. I must say I am inclined to sympathize with Ireland and wonder why the British premier is unrelenting, when his attitude is so closely hinged with the fate of Ireland. I do not propose to discuss the question in detail nor assume to have the solution for so perplexing a problem remembering that I am an American and that we too have involved affairs of state. . . .

In a few more weeks we shall have returned to Oxford with invaluable data as a background for our work there. A study of Literature is incomplete without the historic connection and never in my life have I had such an interesting piece of research in both fields as I have during these six weeks in London and vicinity. . . .

Lovingly yours, Esther.

December 31—Today we went to the wonderful exhibition of Spanish art at the Burlington House. Splendid representations of many periods—El Greco, Velazquez, and many modernists. Many exquisite pictures are in the latter collection. I love the carved things—I am sure I could model in clay! We had tea with Miss Benjamin's mother and sisters at S[outh] Kensington.

January 1, 1921—The New Year was ushered in with bells at midnight. We went to Ely in Holborn. Ely Place garden mentioned in Act III, Sc. 4—Richard III [Shakespeare]: "My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn, I saw good strawberries in your garden there." We went through Staple Inn court, where Dr. Johnson wrote "Rasselas" at the time he occupied lodgings there. Saw Swedish Ballet this afternoon and reviewed a long lesson in Italian.

January 2—We went to Albert Hall to hear Tchaikowsky concert directed by Koussevitzki. Exquisite violin solo part in "Concerto for Violin and Orchestra" done by young M. Bratza.

January 3—Today we visited shops—Selfridges [Department Store] especially, where we had lunch. In the evening we saw "Cinderella," in spectacular pantomime in Drury Lane.

January 5—We spent the forenoon at the British Museum studying especially beautiful old illuminated manuscripts and treasures of literary associations—manuscripts and letters. I had my first visit to a wonderful collection of mummies, and admire Grecian art. In the afternoon we saw Maurice Moskovitch in the "Great Lover" at the Shaftesbury. The performance was excellent!

January 6—Today we have walked in the vicinity of Royal palaces—Buckingham, St. James and Marlborough House. Beautiful vista from Buckingham Palace! We passed through Downing Street, past No. 10, the guarded residence of the British premier. In the afternoon we walked in lovely Kensington gardens, finding the charming Peter Pan facing the Serpentine. We walked through the gardens, the pleached lime [tree] walk and the orangery of the Kensington Palace.

January 7—Frances and I went shopping this morning and purchased material for summer gowns we are to make. I bought bits of lace for gifts. The rain has poured most of the day. We went this afternoon to the East Side stopping on the way at Marylebow Church, the Guild Hall, the church of St. Giles Cripplegate where Milton is buried. We walked from St. Paul's Cathedral to the Bank of England in Threadneedle [Street]. We saw also the mansion of the Lord Mayor. We found No. 37 Cheapside, the place of the Mermaid Tavern, Bread Street. We took a bus to Limehouse following the Commercial Road east. We had hoped to visit the Chinese Quarter of Limehouse, but dusk came too soon. Lunched at interesting Pimm's Restaurant.

January 8—I had pictures taken for passports, joining Frances and Miss Benjamin late, at the Wallace Collection in Manchester square. We heard an excellent lecture on the rare gems in the collection, including furniture, enamels, porcelain, pictures etc. We saw "Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Court Theatre. Lovely performance! We had tea with Miss Benjamin's mother and sisters. Frances went to see "Ralph Royster Dayster" this evening and I stayed at home to finish preparations for our journey to Canterbury.

January 9—(Canterbury Pilgrimage) We left London today at noon (I should say the hotel, for London is endlessly large!), taking a train to the embankment and walking across Blackfriars Bridge to Southwark Bankside, where we found the sites of bearbaiting places—Swan, Rose, and Globe theatres; house from which Wren watched St. Paul's being built. . . . We [took]. . . a bus to Greenwich where we spent the first night of our journey, stopping at Ship Tavern, our pleasant large room facing the Thames.

January 10—We had a delicious breakfast in the Ship's dining room, looking out during our meal on the many boats on the Thames, radiant in the sunshine and blueness of skies. We went to the parish church, burial place of Wolfe; climbed hill leading to Royal Observatory, then on to famous Black Heath (Henry VI). We walked through the heath in the direction of Shooters' Hill following old Roman Road. Rain fell in sheets as we walked on through Welling, Bexley, Crayford, reaching Dartford at 4 o'clock—walk of about 13 miles today. . . . Tonight we are stopping at "Ye Black Boy," other places being filled.

January 11—After looking into the church at Dorchester (we paid only 356d together for lodging!)¹⁶ we followed the old road again eastward. The morning was especially beautiful. We saw skylarks in the meadows and heard them sing. Four aeroplanes passed

us going toward London. A few miles from Dorchester our road became a footpath through woods. We stopped at Swanscombe church and village, where we purchased refreshments and went on our way to lovely little Cobham, where we are spending the night in a quaint village home. We had our supper at the Leather Bottle, the Pickwick Inn. During the day we have had sight of the Thames most of the way, and villages Gravesend, Chalk, and others.

Morning following—Leather Bottle: I am sitting in Dickens' old armchair, presented to "mine host," Mr. Smith, after the *Pickwick Papers* were finished. Last night we saw the room with its Dickensian treasures lighted in the glow of a fire at the end of the room. We had our supper at the large mahogany table in the middle of the room. A spry little woman served us new laid eggs, bread and butter, tea, marmalade and caraway-seed cake. This morning "mine host" serves us at a smaller table in the corner. We have the same repast as the previous night excepting the rich delicious cake. The old clock near the fireplace ticks solemnly. An old leather bottle hangs to my left, pictures are covering the walls—chairs are lined in straight rows.

January 12—We lingered in the lovely old Cobham Church with its wonderful brasses; stopped a few moments at the old almshouse. From Cobham we wandered through sweet dripping woods on the road to Gad's Hill. Along the way are blossoming snowdrops, primroses and gorse! We reached Gad's Hill at noon and had lunch at the Falstaff Inn. We were admitted to the sweet old place of Dickens now owned by Judge Latham. The maid showed us the library of the famous author and told us we might be permitted to visit the Wilderness. . . . Then we set forth to find again our Pilgrim Road, walking through heavy showers and loving the freshness of hills and meadows, apple orchards and gardens—lovely bright green fields with flocks of sheep grazing in contentment. As we neared the three towns the clouds became rosy—our Kent countryside a dream world! We are spending the night in the old Bull Hotel in Rochester near the Midway.

January 13—We left Rochester after visiting the lovely old cathedral, taking a bus from Chatham to Canterbury. We passed through long stretches of orchards and hop fields.

January 14—A perfect day in beautiful Canterbury! We visited the oldest church in the kingdom—St. Martin's—where services have been held for 1,300 years! In the afternoon we went to the cathedral—magnificent inspiring beauty of high-reaching arches! We were taken through chapels and the crypt, up the stairs worn by pilgrims coming to pay tribute at the Shrine of Thomas of Becket, through cloisters of age and beauty. If one could but spend an hour daily in the beautiful Temple. . . . We spent the night at the Clarendon on the Thames in Gravesend.

January 15—This morning we found the church of Pocahontas' burial; at noon we took a bus to Chalk, the "long" village of Dickens' honeymoon. We found the little frame house with the tablet and the Dickens mask, and loved the quiet and misty distance of Kentish country surrounding. We returned to London for luggage and letters and caught a 4:15 train for Oxford.—dear sweet city of our English home! We were welcomed warmly by the household at St. Rognvolds [her residence] and enjoyed letters from home.

January 16—Today we went to the Latin Litany at St. Mary's University Church combining the Hilary term opening with the assize sermon.¹⁷ The judge came in his wig with a procession of scarlet dignitaries. After services we watched the judge drive away in his coach for state occasions. This afternoon we made our term schedule of lectures.

January 17—I registered my programme for the Hilary term with Mrs. Johnson and paid my matriculation fee of four pounds. I shall have the following courses:

Restoration Drama. H.F.B. Smith. Schools [undergraduate exams].

Age of Ann. Sir Walter Raleigh. Schools.

General Lit. Sir Walter Raleigh. Schools.

English History 1603-88. R. B. Mowat. Corpus Christi.

Poetry—Chaucer to Spenser. D. Nichol Smith. Schools.

The Tudors. M. W. Patterson. Trinity.

European Lit. in the 16th Cent. Dr. A. J. Carlyle. Lincoln.

I purchased my student's cap and gown and attended first lectures.

University of Oxford



DELEGACY FOR WOMEN STUDENTS

Society of Oxford Home-Students

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Esther Gunnison

B.S. Colorado.

matriculated by the University of Oxford
was ~~entered upon the Register of Women Students~~ in

Hilary Term, 1921, that she resided in Oxford as a Student

of the Society for 2 Terms, Hilary 1921 - Trinity 1921,

and that she attended Lectures in the University given for the Honours Schools of *Literae Humaniores*, *Modern History* & *English Language & Literature* by: Prof. Sir Walter Raleigh M.A., Prof. Gilbert Murray M.A. D.Litt., Rev. A.J. Carlyle M.A. D.Litt., H.V.B. Brett-Smith M.A., R.B. Howat M.A. D.Nichol-Smith M.A., Rev. H.W. Patterson M.A., J. Middleton Murry B.A. & others.

Principal.

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Christine M. S. Burrows -

January 18—I was matriculated today at the Divinity School and wore for the first time my cap and gown. During the matriculation ceremony we signed our names in the large register of students, then passed to Vice-Chancellor Tarnell, rector of Exeter, from whom we received certificates of admission to the university. The vice-chancellor repeated a Latin speech of recognition of admission. All was brief and impressive. In the afternoon I attended the first Terminal [term] Tea at Mrs. Johnson's.

January 19—This evening the household attended a whist drive at the Town Hall; the whist drive was given for the Institute for the Blind. The Mayor of Oxford, to whom I was introduced during the evening, presided.

January 26—We were entertained at a luncheon given by Mrs. Whitmarsh at the Town Hall. Among the guests were Sir George and Lady Dashwood and Miss Dashwood, Alice, Lady Tynmouth, and the Rev. Mr. Inge. We were present at the opening of the World Service Exhibition, by the mayor.

January 26, 1921.

Dear Jim:

. . . Since I wrote you last from London I have reveled in a number of privileges which I know will interest you. I believe I wrote you about Christmas in London so I shall not enumerate events of that memorable day. During our five weeks in London we wandered from end to end, from the row of Royal Palaces, beginning with Buckingham, to Limehouse, the Chinese slums of the East Side docks. Buckingham is as beautifully located on its high site near the great Hyde Park as the latter [Limehouse] is unspeakably situated in misery and dirt. But were I to choose one or the other as a setting for a dramatic novel I should take Limehouse: its dirty, narrow, cobblestone streets lined with miserable old houses; its smell of stagnant water and damp wood—an air filled with noises of heavy carts and people whose voices reflect the ungentle manner of those who know nothing happier in their lives than great struggle for existence. But I think even in the slums must be an occasional person with the soul of an artist or a philosopher whose environment is overwhelming. And that is surely the basis of great drama. . . .

But I wanted especially to tell you about the sixth week of our vacation, which was quite the most wonderful yet. But, by way of introduction, let me explain that one of my university courses happens to be a study of the beginning of English literature. . . .

January 27, 1921

About 600 years ago the poet [Geoffrey Chaucer] lived in London where he wrote the Canterbury Tales, which tell of the pilgrimages of people of all classes from London to Canterbury (55 miles distant) where is located a famous old cathedral. The

old poem states quite definitely the road taken by the pilgrims and the villages through which we passed. So we crossed the Thames going to Southwark . . . from which the Canterbury pilgrims started their annual pilgrimage. We located their road, the old stone highway built by the Romans during their invasions of England, and began our walking pilgrimage to the famous old city. . . . On Thursday evening we reached Canterbury, having traveled by country bus the last miles of our journey. The weather was ideal and reminded me of a Colorado springtime. I heard for the first time a skylark's exquisite song, and as a reminder of the years between the age of Chaucer and the present, four aeroplanes flew over us enroute from Dover to London. . . .

We were glad to return to quiet old Oxford after the intensive five weeks of London. Last week I was formally accepted as a student of Oxford University. The ceremony was impressive to say the least and during a quiet, intense interval after signing my name in the great old record of Oxford students, I was called by the vice-chancellor, a white haired sage in regal academic dress who handed me a certificate in Latin of my admission as a student to Oxford. He then removed his academic cap and repeated in Latin the formal verbal admission of students. A small group of others went through the same sort of thing. Believe me, I cherish the record I was so fortunate as to leave in Colorado. It had gone before me to receive the inspection and consideration of Oxford and I feel repaid for the effort I made in Greeley as a student.

You question whether or not I am "stretching time" here. I must admit my greatest difficulty is finding sufficient time for the wealth of interests I am tempted to indulge in. My courses at the university are altogether wonderful and incidentally I am combining English history with the literary courses. I attend lectures in famous old halls, sometimes sitting beside an Indian prince, sometimes a young nobleman—frequently beside a scholar twice my own age, thanking Providence that my own powers as a student, a teacher, a loyal citizen to my blessed country need know no limitations. Yes, I shall look forward to coming again sometime. In the meantime life is going to be fuller for the wonderful experiences I am having. . . . We are planning to spend the spring vacation of six weeks (from the middle of March to the latter part of April) in Italy. We find from good authority that because of the low rate of exchange we can make

the trip for the same amount of expenses we'd have staying in England. . . . If we go to Italy we shall be in Rome for Easter. We shall go also to Venice, Naples and Florence. My friend knows Italy from north to south and we are studying Italian during spare moments. You may not believe me when I tell you that I can converse now in Italian sufficiently to make myself understood regarding a variety of subjects. Your sister, Esther

January 30—We attended the university service this forenoon. The dear old Margaret Professor of Divinity gave us a beautiful sermon on "Behold the Lamb of God." In the afternoon we saw "Eager Heart" by the Guild Players. The sweet story was sincerely told in its bad setting at the Corn Exchange. Lovely costumes and grouping!

February 3—I received a ticket today admitting me to the . . . debate this evening at the Union. The members of the Union are men who occupy the lower hall, while lady visitors are seated in the balcony. During the period open for general business a great deal of amusement was provoked by a contest [series] of witty questions put to the chairman, who in turn met each question with equal cleverness. The question debated concerned the admission of women students to Union debates. The negative won.

February 5—Frances and I visited University College Dining Hall this forenoon and spent the afternoon and evening at the World Service Exhibition. We heard Lady Murray's [wife of Sir Gilbert Murray] eloquent plea for the suffering children of Europe and offered our services for a night a week sewing little clothes. We had supper at the Town Hall and heard Lord Asquith [former British prime minister] in the evening.

February 9—Shrove Tuesday. Today the Prince of Wales has been in Oxford to receive his degree of Doctor of Civil Law and to dedicate the War Memorial at Magdalen [College]. I was not among the few fortunate home students who drew tickets for the Sheldonian [Theater], where the Prince received his degree. The Norwegian girls and I saw him with hundreds of others driving down High [Street] and leaving the theater. What an impressive occasion for Oxonians and for us Americans! Our beautiful flag has flown beside the British flag everywhere. In the afternoon Frances and I hurried through crowds of eager folk waiting to see their Prince, to cross the Magdalen Bridge for our bus to Headington, where we supposed Miss Barr lives, for she had invited us to tea. We wandered through the lovely village to learn that we had mistaken the address, so we returned to tea at Buols. This evening is "pancake evening" at St. Rognvolds.

February 12—Frances and I were up at 6:30 this morning and breakfasted in the large quiet dining room before any other member of the household stirred. We left Oxford together with Miss Perkins at 8 o'clock, taking a bus to Burford. The drive of 18 miles through the country was lovely—downs and vales and misty distances! Burford is a wonderful old village [entrance to the Cotswold Hills] built on a hillside,—it seems hundreds of years older than any village I have yet seen in England. We spent an hour in the lovely old church, one of the most interesting churches in Oxfordshire. We had lunch at The Swan, where M. Melba [Australian opera singer] has recently lived during her month's visit to Burford. After lunch we walked five miles to Shipton-under-Wychwood, where we visited the fine old church. We returned to Oxford by train.

February 18—We saw the boat races this afternoon—the Torpids [annual rowing event]; the Isis was lovely, the undergraduates full of enthusiasm for their various crews.

February 19—Frances, Misses Lassens, Perkins, and I visited Worcester College and lovely gardens, and the old castle and [hanging] mound in Oxford. This evening we heard Hilaire Belloc [English novelist and poet] lecture on prose at the Union. After the lecture we went to the American Club, where the lads gave a program of music and nonsense, bless 'em!

February 24—I have spent the day in bed. Today [Friday] I have spent in my room. Frances and I have read parts of *The Ring and the Book* [by Robert Browning]. The day

has been wet and we have been happy with cheery fire. I paid my University lecture fees of 3-15 [3 pounds, 15 shillings] today.

March 1, 1921

Dear Jim:

Our winter term is nearing its close and we await with much joy the coming vacation. . . . We leave London March 12, going to Dover, where we cross the Strait of Dover enroute to Paris. We will be in Paris Monday morning and leave Tuesday evening for Genoa on the Italian Mediterranean. We spend Wednesday night in Genoa and then go directly to Rome. Thus we are in Rome for Easter which is an unusual experience. We spend two weeks in Rome, studying the wonderful history of the oldest of all civilisations, and the environment of countless literary men and women. Italy is a Mecca for literary people of all ages and I am anticipating unlimited delight in discoveries I am to make.

From Italy we go to Naples for a few days, thence returning to Florence via Rome. We divide the rest of the time between Florence and the vicinity, and Venice. During the last week we spend a few days in Switzerland and return to England via Paris. Both routes will be direct and yet greatly varied. The trip to and from Italy (round trip) amounts to less than \$60.00 and living in Italy, from accounts given us by hotels there, seems unusually low. . . .

My University work goes splendidly. I am more than delighted to have come—the lectures are unusually comprehensive and the year of vacation with its wonderful variety of new interests is an experience I can't very well measure in words. The great difficulty is that the days are never half long enough for the things I should like to crowd in. By the way, a Rhodes scholar from the University at Lincoln [Phillip Means of Omaha], who is here for special law study is coming next Sunday for dinner. He wrote to me a week ago explaining his knowing me through Aunt Ida and asking permission to call. I invited him to dinner and am anxious to meet him. It seems that he is making an unusual record for himself. At any rate it is always good to see someone from home. . . .

Lovingly yours, Esther.

March 10, 1921

Dear Jim:

. . . I wish I had time to write you at length of some of the special things—for instance the afternoon I spent at the home of

an English novelist and director for six years of archeological research in Egypt. For some unknown reason they have chosen me as one of the students to enjoy their beautiful home whenever I choose, and I am very much flattered that the gentleman should quit his work when I appear to chat. Both he and his wife have broad sympathies and are very popular in literary circles. Their home is richly furnished in old Oriental and Italian treasures . . .

Tomorrow the Queen [Mary] comes to Oxford to receive the degree (honorary) of Doctor of Civil Law and incidentally to review the women students.¹⁸ I am to have the distinguished privilege of being present at the ceremony of the conferment. A certain number of students have been selected and thus England honors an American student. I shall, however, be in a group with other compatriots. . . .

Lovingly yours, Esther.

March 2—Today we went in a party to Woodstock. . . [and] went on to Blenheim Castle, passing the great, lovely lake and entering several large gateways on the castle court.¹⁹ We walked several miles throughout the wonderful woods. Our path shaded by great trees, followed the lake, passing the Pool of Fair Rosamund [mistress of Henry II, 1154-1189]. . . . Late in the afternoon we took the train back to Oxford and had tea at Buols.

March 6—We have packed our trunks today. Mr. Reese came for dinner and seemed to enjoy the short visit. Frances and I heard the Bach Choir give the Beethoven "Mass in D" at the Sheldonian this afternoon. We had tea at the Clarendon and helped organize a Cosmopolitan Club of Foreign Students in Oxford.

March 8—Frances and I went to the University Grind this afternoon. It rained all afternoon, but the cross-country riding and crowds were interesting. The fields and hedges especially lovely.

March 10—Today we make final preparations for leaving Oxford. We attended the Terminal Tea at Mrs. Johnson's this afternoon. I had coffee this forenoon with Miss Bourne (Bryn Mawr) at the Cadena.

March 11—Oxford has been festive for the visit of [Dowager] Queen Alexandra, Queen Mary and Lord [George N.] Curzon.²⁰ I saw the queen [Mary] receive her degree at the Sheldonian. We lunched at Buols and were "received" by the queen at Lady Margaret Hall. We left Oxford for London at 4:35. I chatted with Mr. Reese at the Oxford station and saw him again at the Paddington [Station]. We are spending the night at the Wilton Hotel (Frances, Misses Muller and Quillfeldt and I).

March 12—I had my passport visaed by the French consul. We left London at noon, crossed the Dover strait to Calais, traveling through northern France to Paris. Arrived in Paris at 7:45 this evening. Mr. Isaacs met us and we drove to Hotel de Grand Hommes where we have rooms.

[Between March 12 and April 24, Miss Gunnison traveled in France, Italy, and Germany].

April 24—We left Paris this morning traveling through pretty country to Boulogne, where we took a boat across the Channel to Dover. England is glorious in the springtime! We reached Oxford late this evening. Letters!

April 25-26—Rae greeted us this morning, and we are planning our Lecture courses, selecting Sir Walter Raleigh, Dr. Carlyle, D. Nichol Smith, Mr. Patterson, and Mr. Mowat. The spring days are so beautiful—every minute I am conscious of the glory...

April 27-28—We are enjoying excellent lectures and lovely Oxford. Miss Burrows, our new principal, entertained the Home Students at tea, where we saw many of our Oxford friends.

April 27, 1921

Dear Jim:

Once again we are in Oxford enjoying many things [after her European trip]. I have a wonderful course of studies this term and am more delighted than ever with Oxford! When we returned from our vacation tour, we found England wonderfully beautiful. I marvel that one little country can have such wealth of loveliness. . . .

I believe I wrote you last from Rome. I wish I had time to write at length of each place we visited after Rome! We spent several days in the very Southern part of Italy—Naples and that glorious mountain island rising out of the Mediterranean, Capri, a veritable paradise of remoteness and beauty!. . . We visited Pompeii, the famous old buried city (78 A.D.) now excavated and presenting an excellent example of a city, planned to a detail in every respect by an ancient civilisation! We spent a day wandering through the famous old place. Then we came on to Florence, another city Romanesque in general plan and in historic importance. Florence has been and is the home of poets and artists. . . . From Florence we went to Venice, where we spent four days. Venice is unique, romantic: the "street canals" everywhere, the grand canal with its picturesque old palaces on either side and its gondolas especially charming at night when hundreds of lights are reflected in the water, the songs of the gondoliers—all are very like a fairy tale. I was awakened the first morning by the glorious "Star Spangled Banner," played on board a US battleship anchored near us! You can well understand the emotion I felt, in hearing our national anthem in a place so foreign. We spent a day in Milan enroute to Paris, for in Milan is a cathedral magnificent beyond words!

From Milan we took an express train to Paris, spending only about twenty hours for the journey. I cannot begin to tell you the wonders of my journey! I had not dreamed of half the treasures and the glorious beauty of Italy! And I hasten to assure you that I did everything one could wish to do in Italy—I had a liberal course, a liberal education in history and art during those five weeks....

Mother encourages me to go to Sweden since I am so near. I may go the latter part of June for a few weeks, crossing the North

Sea directly to Goteborg, where I will look up Uncle Joe [Gunnarson] and then going on to Motala, Mother's home. The entire journey is only three days from Oxford. Aunt Emma, Mother's sister, has written me several times urging me to come. I am planning to finish my work of this term a week or two earlier if I take the trip to Sweden. . . . Your sister, Esther.

April 30—We heard Gilbert Murray this morning on "The Relation of History to Literature." This afternoon Miss Crocker entertained the American women to tea at The Olde North Gate. We saw *Lorna Doone* in movies later in the afternoon.

May 1—We went to Magdalen Tower at five o'clock this morning to hear from the top of the Tower the lovely hymn to the sunrise. In the afternoon Miss Q. and I bicycled to Wolvercote. Lovely, lovely May Day!

May 2—We danced in the Lecture Room this evening, Louis being the guest of honor. He honored me with the "Home Sweet Home" [last dance].

May 7—Frances, Rae, Misses Bixilius, Q. and I took a bus this morning to Abingdon in Berkshire, where we visited the old Abbey ruins and the churches and almshouse. After lunching on the church step, we walked to sweet old Sutton Courtney, passing through Townsend and following a path through buttercup and daisy meadows, then walking beside the river until we reached the village. We saw the famous old manor house, visited the little church, and wandered through the quaint old village, passing Mr. Asquith's house and gardens (The Wharf). We had tea at the George and Dragon, then returned to Abingdon through the same charming meadows. We heard a cuckoo this afternoon.

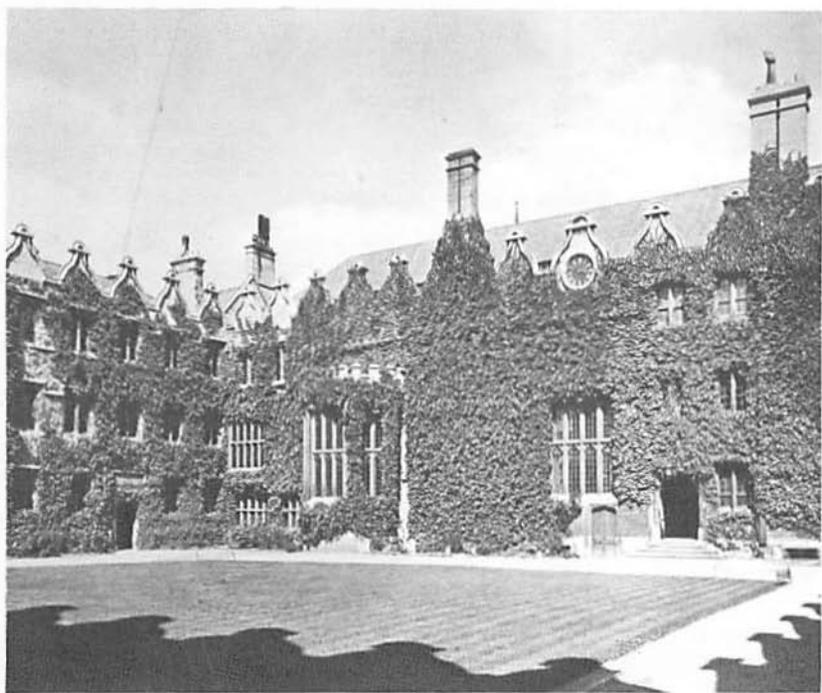
May 10—This afternoon we heard Sir Walter Raleigh and Robert Bridges [Poet Laureate, 1913-1930] give an oral examination at the Schools for a B. Lit. on Donne. We had tea at Buols. We went to Magdalen gardens and Addison's Walk and heard the chapel service at six with the sweet boys' choir.

May 11—We visited the Oxford prison today, the tower from which Queen Maude [Matilda, consort of Henry I] escaped, the crypt, the [hanging] mound, and the old well. We wandered through the lovely Worcester Gardens.

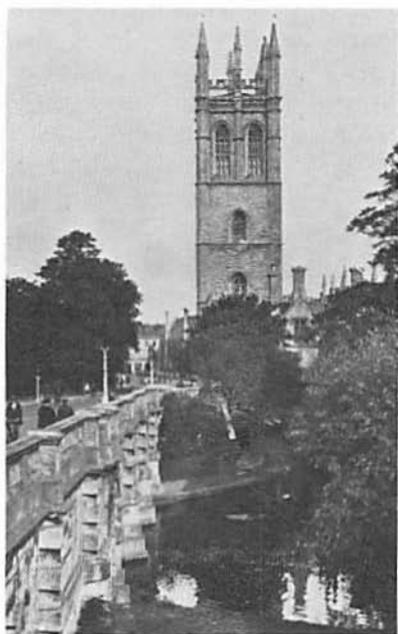
May 14—We heard Mr. Wade Grey lecture on "Introduction to Ancient History" at the Ashmolean this morning. We prepared a lunch and left Oxford at noon for Eynsham, where we visited the church and ate our lunch beneath a large elm on our way to Stanton Harcourt. At Stanton Harcourt we visited the fine old church with its Harcourt tombs. We visited the old tower, once a part of the old baronial manor house, one room having been used by Alexander Pope, friend of the Harcourts. We were taken to the kitchen with its fireplaces, ovens and no chimney, and through the sweet old gardens with their fish pond. We had tea at the old inn; nearby are the old stocks used during the 13th century. We walked on to Bablockhythe, where the ferry took us across the river. We walked through the fields and woods to Cumnor; the skylarks and robins sang ecstatically, while the cuckoo calls filled the interludes! At Cumnor we visited the old church where Amy Robsart once worshipped. From Cumnor we followed the long hill to where we took a bus to Oxford.

May 15—The American girls met at the Common Room this afternoon to discuss University interests with Dr. McLane. Mrs. McLane was present also, and we all had tea together. We decided to draw up a set of rules and regulations regarding students in Oxford for information to colleges in America sending students to Oxford. Later we went to the American Club room to rehearse songs for the next meeting of the Cosmop. Club. I chatted with Mr. Reese.

May 16—We took the char-a-banc [single-deck bus] to London this morning. Our drive was wonderful! We had lunch with the Benjamins in their pretty flat, did some shopping at the Trocadero.... We saw Windsor Castle outlined against the sky....



Jesus College, Oxford



Magdalen Tower, Oxford

May 17—Today we visited sweet Stratford-on-Avon. We visited the dear old house of Shakespeare and the lovely garden. We walked across the buttercup meadows at Shattery, where we stopped for a few minutes at the Lavender House, then going on to the sweet old Ann Hathaway Cottage and the lovely old-fashioned garden in the front of the house. We walked back again through the meadows to Stratford to the Memorial Theatre, where we heard "A School for Scandal"; on the whole, very well done. We visited the old church on the Avon with its tomb of Shakespeare, and its beautiful shaded walk.

May 18—Today I entertained Frances, Rae, Miss Q., and two Spanish friends, [also] Misses Werner and Oldfelt of Stockholm at the Shamrock [Tea Rooms] for tea. We attended the Eights [a yearly boat race] after tea.

May 19—The Barrs, Madge, Allen, and the father entertained Frances, Rae, and me at a picnic tea on the river. We punted across the river to the Balliol [College] meadows, where we spent a lovely afternoon watching the races. . . . We heard [Harold Joseph] Laski [English political scientist, 1893-1950, identified with leftist causes] at Ruskin Hall this evening on "Communism."

May 22, 1921

Dear Jim:

. . . This coming week begins the last half of the Spring term in Oxford. It is full of events that make history for the University, especially from the women's point of view, and I am having a generous share of things generally. I shall leave Oxford with a wealth of delightful literary acquaintances and associations. My latest friend of letters is an old gentleman who writes short stories; he is known and loved by hundreds. People flock to his home, where I have been entertained several times during the past two weeks, and I meet a number of the college men and women with mutual interests. The young daughter of my friend is taking the same literary courses as I, and one of the sons is an artist whose work is now on exhibition at the Royal Academy and the British Museum. The entire family has entertained me royally. . . .

The year has meant so immeasurably much to me I shall have enough to think of, to write of, to live on for years to come. And when I return to the classroom in the fall I shall feel that I have some right to "teach." Believe me, there will be nothing dull about my work, and in the meantime when others are dreaming, I shall take my pen and relive the wonderful experiences in an attempt to make them real to others. If I could express my gratitude to you for all your generosity and inspiration, I should write something at once that would immortalize the name of our family. But one does not achieve fame all at once—I do not hope for fame. Indeed, I dare only hope that I may have helped to make a happier, more enlightened world, wherever I happen to be. . . .

Affectionately yours, Esther.

May 29—In the afternoon we had a lecture by Miss Swann on "English Costume for 1000 Years," in the lecture room. Miss Swann wore her little bonnet, the usual black, fitted gown, white jabot and red roses in her bonnet and on her bosom. The setting was quaintly picturesque: flags of England and America crossed with a great League of Mercy banner in the center; dressed dolls on a table in the center serving as models, pictures from old manuscripts distributed on the front. Before delivering the lecture, our lady moistened her handkerchief with eau de cologne, took a swallow of water from a tall glass on the table, picked up her cane with one hand and her lecture with the other, and, after addressing various personal remarks to individuals, including her sister and the gardener, began the lecture, trying to seem informal. We had a happy afternoon.

June 3—I wrote to Spokane schools today and did many left-over things. Frances and Rae went to Kenncot, the William Morris village. We heard John Masefield [Poet Laureate, 1930-1967] this evening at the American Club.

June 6—This afternoon we visited Blenheim and were admitted to the splendid old castle of the Marlboroughs. The library is cheerful and home-like. The duke is away marrying another American woman; the latest duchess is in France; her portraits are lovely. We had tea in the village.

June 8—Today Rae, Frances, Miss Q. and I took the Matthew Arnold walk to South Hinksey, then over the fields to Chiswell Farm, where we saw the curious old pollarded elm. From the farm we crossed the pasture to Arnold's tree, where we rested a few moments to enjoy the wonderful distances. We then crossed a field to the main road, where we met John Masefield in his Ford.

June 18—I visited the Swedish Legation this morning for my passport, and missed my Tilbury train. Frances and Hervor [Quillfeldt] accompanied me to Lichbury on a later train. I was rowed to the S.S. *Thule* in a small boat and we sailed for Sweden at 5 o'clock this afternoon.

June 20—We have had a terrible voyage over the North Sea, a terrific storm damaging the ship, and I have been very ill. At five o'clock we landed in Goteborg. Dear old Uncle Gunnar met me at the boat. He took me to the Missions Hotel, where I have a lovely quiet room. I dined and walked with Uncle this evening.

June 21—The day is rainy. Uncle and I breakfasted late, then went to Uncle's room to look at old pictures. We visited also the city library this morning where Uncle spends much of his time. After lunch I walked to Domkyrkan, the market, and Gustav Adolf's Monument and Gustav Adolf Torg. Uncle and I walked into the busier part of the city over the old moat and back past the large old city market. (I bought Swedish books this afternoon.)

[She then visited Motala, Sweden, her mother's birthplace.]

July 8—Everyone of the relatives was at the station to bid me "goodbye." Everyone brought lovely flowers and I left dear Motala this afternoon with many loving farewell greetings. I arrived Goteborg this evening and Uncle was at the train! We dined and walked in the lovely evening twilight.

July 9—Uncle took me to the boat, and our ship *Thule* left at noon. If only he were accompanying me to America. I am on my way home!

July 11—The journey over the North Sea has been comparatively quiet and lovely. We arrived in London at noon and I am spending the night at the "Abbotsford." The day is very hot! A telegram from Oxford tells me the cable has not yet come for S.S. ticket. I telephoned to Dorchester and found Frances and Rae there.

July 12—I left London at noon for Dorchester, and am spending a few days here at the King's Arms. Frances and Rae returned from a drive early this evening! We walked to the old Roman breastworks, following the old Roman road. I have letters from Louise, Edna, Bells, and Frances tells me happy news from Greeley; perhaps I return there to teach this fall!

July 15—Frances, Rae and I went to the Cunard office [in Southampton] for mail and final arrangements for tickets. A letter from Paul! We are having a heavy rain after a long drought. We drove at noon to Winchester, sweet old city of many associations. We

lingered long in the beautiful cathedral, and visited the college chapel, dining hall cloisters; the King Alfred burial place (legendary). Tea at the inn of God-Begot, where I met the proprietor and friend of the *Lapland*.

July 16—We left Southhampton late in the afternoon and are sailing on the large *S.S. Aquitania* for home!

July 17—Our journey progresses over quiet seas. Today is foggy and we move slowly.

Back in the United States, Miss Gunnison taught for a year (1921-1922) at Kearney (Nebraska) State Teachers' College. The next year she taught handicapped children in Casper, Wyoming, and met city engineer Justin T. Kingdon, a graduate of the University of Michigan and a former Army captain. They were married on August 15, 1924.

The next two decades of Esther Kingdon's life were spent chiefly in Denver as wife and mother. However, she continued to study foreign languages, particularly Italian. With her husband retired and her two daughters nearly grown, Mrs. Kingdon accepted a position at the Denver Public Library, where, finally, her various talents were put to use in helping patrons literate only in a non-English language, in writing and broadcasting book reviews and lecturing on literary topics. The letter she received from Head Librarian John T. Eastlick when she retired reflects the nature of her contribution:

During the years that you have worked in the Denver Public Library you have contributed greatly to its services to the community. Not only your knowledge of library materials and your subject knowledge but also the personal qualities which make you the great individual that you are, all have enhanced the value of the Library's service to the community.

It is obvious from her letters and diary that Miss Gunnison was socially popular at Oxford. If she made personal contributions to life there, it may have been through active involvement in organizing a Cosmopolitan Club to broaden the sphere of fellowship, and in helping to codify Oxford rules and regulations to make them available to American students before their arrival. As for herself, it was at Oxford, where great ideas were disseminated to all the world, that Esther Gunnison realized gradually what it meant to be emancipated: that she could set her own goals—they need no longer be prescribed by society (see letter, January 26, 1921).

NOTES

1. The editor wishes to acknowledge the encouragement and considerable assistance of Nebraska State Historical Society personnel. Historical background has been taken from Vera Brittain's *The Women at Oxford* (Macmillan, 1960). Dr. Anne Kleimola, Department of History, University of Nebraska, called attention to this source and made her copy available for reference. The Gunnarson name was spelled differently by various members of the family.

2. In America the Rhodes scholar is readily identified as being a student at Oxford. These men then comprised a group of 202 scholars, chosen by examination from the British dominions and colonies, the United States, and Germany. Their expenses at Oxford were provided for by Cecil J. Rhodes, English administrator in Africa.

3. Biographical data on Esther Gunnison Kingdon were furnished by her sister, Elizabeth Gunnison, and by her daughters, Mrs. Elizabeth Kingdon Wilson and Mrs. Louise Kingdon Speed.

4. The brother to whom the letters were written was Paul R. Gunnison, nicknamed "Jim."

5. Warren G. Harding, Republican, defeated James A. Cox, Democrat, for the presidency in 1920.

6. De Almeda, Esther Gunnison, and several other students stayed at the board-and-room establishment of a Mrs. Whitmarsh in Oxford. De Almeda, a Chilean or Peruvian, "had only two interests. . . : riding a motorcycle and reading bullfight journals, which Mrs. Whitmarsh did not allow him to read in the drawing room."

7. The idiosyncracies of Mrs. Whitmarsh, her "Dickensian landlady," amused Esther Gunnison. Years later she regaled her children with stories about Mrs. Whitmarsh, "whose long and mumbling grace at the dinner table would always be interrupted by her directions to the servants and late-coming 'paying guests.'"

8. The Ashmolean Museum, opened at Oxford in 1683, is the oldest such institution in Great Britain. It was built to house the collections of Elias Ashmole and John Tradescant. The architect was Sir Christopher Wren.

9. Bertha Johnson was the wife of Arthur Johnson, a fellow of Exeter and a lecturer on modern history at several Oxford colleges. In 1873 she became a member of a new "committee to provide lectures and classes for women," and her husband gave the first lecture to an overflow crowd. After nearly forty years of benevolent and informal autocracy as principal of home students, she resigned her post at the end of Hilary term in January, 1921, at the age of 75. Her successor was Miss C.M.E. Burrows, not only principal of an Oxford women's hall, but a trained history scholar as well. Miss Burrows, in order to prepare women for formal degrees, tightened discipline, raised admissions standards, and built a stronger tutorial staff of women scholars. Thus Esther Gunnison, who matriculated under Mrs. Johnson and continued the year under Miss Burrows, saw in 1921 the end of personalized but somewhat unstructured guidance of women students and the beginning of rigorous scholarly training.

10. "Home students" were those who lived off the campus instead of in college quarters. At first all women allowed to study at Oxford lived "at home," for there were no residence halls for women.

11. Edward VIII ascended the throne in 1936 but reigned only eleven months before abdicating to marry Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson, an American. He was succeeded by his brother, George VI, father of the reigning Queen Elizabeth.

12. Humbert, son of Victor Emmanuel III of Italy, became Humbert II in 1946. He abdicated in the same year.

13. The Irish Free State was established in 1921, thus reducing the friction between the British and Irish.

14. The *Domesday Book* was a record (census and inventory) of every manor in England, all inhabitants, and all property. It was begun in 1085 by William the Conqueror. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* describes its compilation.

15. Richard III is commonly believed to have been the murderer, but many scholars think it was his successor, Henry VII.

16. 365d (365 pence) would have amounted to about 60 cents (American) at that time.

17. Terms of study at Oxford are given these names: Michaelmas (autumn), Hilary (spring), and Trinity (summer).

18. Queen Mary, consort of George V, in 1921 became the first woman to receive an honorary DCL at Oxford.

19. John Churchill (1650-1722) became the first duke of Marlborough. Following the Battle of Blenheim (1704, in Bavaria), in which Marlborough was the victor, he was presented the estate of Blenheim as a reward. Prime Minister Churchill, who led Britain during World War II, was a descendant of Marlborough and was born in Blenheim Palace in 1874.

20. Dowager Queen Alexandra had been the consort of Edward VII. George N. Curzon (1859-1925) served as viceroy of India between 1899 and 1905, as well as occupying other diplomatic posts. As vice-chancellor of Oxford (1907-1925), he did much to further degrees for women.