

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_158674

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 3 18.42.5615

Accession No. 14 637

Author Sinclair, J. G.

Title Portrait of Oxford

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

By J. G. Sinclair

Novels :—

EASINGDEN (1926)

LOVE IN EASINGDEN (1928)

THE RETURN OF THE REBEL (1929)

NO PLACE LIKE HOME (1931)

Satires :—

MAMMON (1926)

TRUSTED LEADERS (1927)

Impressionist :—

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD (1931)

Mr Sinclair has also in preparation
the following works :—

PORTRAIT OF AN AUTHOR (A novel)

THE VERINGER FAMILY (A novel)

AT CLOSE RANGE (Portraits of certain
eminent leaders in politics and literature).

Portrait of Oxford

By

J. G. SINCLAIR

VERACITY PRESS
STURRY : KENT

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD IS ISSUED FOR SALE IN
A LIMITED NUMBERED AND SIGNED EDITION
CONSISTING OF ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-
FIVE COPIES ONLY OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER

All Rights Reserved

*Made and Printed in Great Britain by Northumberland Press Ltd
Newcastle upon Tyne*

“ I brought back with me certain memories of which, if I were not at the end of my space, I should attempt a discreet adumbration : memories of a *fête champêtre* in the beautiful gardens of one or the other colleges—charming lawns and spreading trees, music of Grenadier Guards, ices in striped marquees, mild flirtation of youthful gownsmen and bemuslined maidens ; memories, too, of quiet dinner in common-room, a decorous, excellent repast ; old portraits on the walls and great windows open upon the ancient court, where the afternoon light was fading in the stillness ; superior talk upon current topics, and over all the peculiar air of Oxford.”

HENRY JAMES : *English Hours*.

“ Eight men out of ten regard their time at the university as an interlude. . . . So they will go on frequenting places of amusement because this is to take the line of least resistance. It is less effort than to seek amusement in their own society. . . .

“ Oxford and Cambridge will be unable to equip men for participation in the new society; and the more surely the new society develops, the more obviously unsuitable will they appear.”¹

JULIAN HALL :

Sometime Scholar of Balliol College, Oxford.

“ Any one who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape.”

HAZLITT.

¹ *Alma Mater* or the Future of Oxford and Cambridge.

“The men I was with at Oxford. . . . I see the positions they have now obtained. One has great wealth; another has achieved great notoriety; two or three are in gaol, many are dead, and the rest are unknown. . . .”

HILAIRE BELLOC.

“An undergraduate and an undergraduette told me recently they were up here to have a good time, and were only doing the minimum of work which would prevent them from being sent down. . . .”

DR W. B. SELBIE, *Principal*,
Manchester College, Oxford.

“A University man, by being at a University, sustains the very greatest damage to his intellect. He comes out almost incapable of original thought.”

G. BERNARD SHAW.

“. . . pleasant, easy-going, evasive young men, up to nothing in particular and schooled out of faith, passion or ambition.”

H. G. WELLS.

PRINCIPALLY PERSONAL

ACCEPTING THE INEVITABLE

I am against hasty publication. The major part of PORTRAIT OF OXFORD was written in the years 1926/7: but, of course, I had begun a close study of my data some years earlier. I say "of course", because it will at once be apparent to the reader that so much unpublished fact could not have been assembled without intimate and industrious research, founded on unabating fidelity to the cause at heart.

In an old diary, under the date, January 27th, 19—, I find an entry which reads: "Union debate. . . . Much sound—signifying nothing." That impression, much more matured in Chapter XIV of the present work, has a certain personal chronological interest; for at the moment when I made the above entry I had not the tiniest intuition that afterwards to me would fall the duty of writing PORTRAIT OF OXFORD. But the profound Professor himself, Herr Einstein, has declared that "everything is determined from the Beginning": thus, ipso facto, PORTRAIT OF OXFORD appears in the inevitable evolution of the Determined All.

LOVE IN EQUILIBRIUM

None should write of Oxford whose impulse so to serve does not originate in love. But love lacking equipoise is a perilous power! It must be

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

rid of all ebriated elements if it is faithfully to serve such inspired, rather than self-imposed, tasks as are herein performed. It must be love in equilibrium, static, sure: where illusions no longer remain and yet there is love. Where, though there be no more lingering amazements, since beauty fully explored has yielded complete appeasement, there is still disciplined devotion.

I hope it will be apparent, to those who read in its entirety the following work, that I did my best to expel from myself all such prejudicial " ebriated elements ", as a preliminary to the fulfilment of an inevitable task; as my conscience is crystal-clear in the conviction that in neither paragraph nor phrase have I exceeded the bare necessities of exposition and presentment.

I have honoured my promise to Oxford.

BERNARD SHAW'S WISH

Mr Bernard Shaw recently expressed the wish that " Oxford should be razed to the ground." Only a violent disorder of nature can consummate a desire so comprehensive in scope; and such a chance is in God's hands, and His ways, as we know, are veiled in mystery. In the event, some premonition might be prayed for, on behalf of the few charming people in Oxford, to make good their escape: those few charming people who, while they are in Oxford are not of it; and are impotent, either by precept or example, to alter it. A small mingling of people of another race cannot change Mongolia.

PRINCIPALLY PERSONAL

FIDELITY TO FACT

When Mr Bernard Shaw's wish passes into fulfilment, the people of the future will be as curious about Oxford as our contemporaries are concerning Pompeii. Hence I have remained sternly a servant of what I have observed, not what I have imagined; exactingly expunging whatever appeared to verge on the fanciful: having neither an axe to grind; propaganda to propel; nor any other purpose to serve beyond that of presenting an unimpeachable portrait.

The mere scoffers can still indulge their sarcasm; and the vindictive exult in their invective. I have not loaded the dice. I have assembled all presentable data with the same avoidance of sentiment that I should have wished to practise had I written of a Greek model, or just a common English fungus.

THE AUTHENTIC PORTRAIT

Over the ruins of the departed glory that was Oxford will spread legends in prose and inventions in poetry. Such succulent fictions will seem to many to be the pure essence of a vanished splendour. But for the authentic statement, the unembellished epitaph, sober-minded inquirers will turn to PORTRAIT OF OXFORD.

By it Oxford shall be remembered.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD
Is Dedicated
To
THE OXFORD
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

“ These be your gods, O Israel ! ”

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PRINCIPALLY PERSONAL	11
PREFACE	19

PART I

TOWN AND GOWN—*UNRAVELLED*

CHAP.

I. HALOES	81
II. MODERN MODES	88
III. THOSE CLASSIC TOUCHES !	42
IV. CLIMATE	49
V. IF GOODNESS GREW	52
VI. THE FEAT SUPERLATIVE	56
VII. BANQUET FOR BUS CONDUCTORS	58
VIII. THE OXFORD VOICE	62
IX. RECEPTION OF VISITORS	65
X. ACCORDING TO PATTERN	72
XI. IN ANNUAL DESHABILLE	78
XII. BEHIND THE SCREEN	82
XIII. MODEL SONS OF ALMA MATER	84
XIV. EMBRYONIC STATESMEN	91
XV. THE UNION SOCIETY	94
XVI. RUSKIN COLLEGE	98
XVII. DONS AND DECADENCE	100

CONTENTS

PART II

PROOFS OF SUPERIORITY

The Five Exhibits

	PAGE
PROOFS OF SUPERIORITY	107
EXHIBIT NO. I	109
EXHIBIT NO. II	110
EXHIBIT NO. III	111
EXHIBIT NO. IV	112
EXHIBIT NO. V	118

PART III

HER FAME REPOSES . . .

HER FAME REPOSES	117
----------------------------	-----

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

Notes for a Panegyric

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM. <i>Notes for a Panegyric</i>	121
--	-----

PREFACE

I

A NEW book about Oxford is not an uncommon event. The city and its associations have inspired many historical papers, a mass of maps, charts, drawings, and all manner of books filled with poems and prose. From Eugenius Philalethes to Matthew Arnold, and onwards till yesterday, a stream of praise has been spilled over Oxford through the centuries. (Many spasmodic outbursts have, perforce, found final interment in the *Oxford Times*.)

A few frenzied poets (in their first terms), reluctantly emerging from a too-protracted puberty, have done their best, in verses printed at personal expense, to endow Oxford with a halo hardly less effulgent than the white circle which commonly illumines a head of Christ. Such scintillations, though, of their nature, transient, possess sufficient power to dazzle outsiders; to conceal successfully the realities of Oxford from the close observation of the world.

The truth has never yet been told of Oxford. It has basked in a glow of chimeras. Such cunning canards, and clamant facts, justify the present work, which is done strictly as a diagnostic duty. Diagnosis must burke no fact, however unpleasant

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

the revelation. Such diagnosis as this book will disclose is long overdue.

I unravel, unmask, and illumine. I hold up a mirror of truth to a posture that has prospered for centuries: a colossal affectation. I take the skeleton from the cupboard and set her in the sun.

Varying the metaphor, I tap the massive idol with a miniature mallet, and lo! it creaks and yields only a hollow sound. It is not what it is represented to be! Its forbidding aspect, its overwhelming exterior, affect me no longer with awe. As I look more closely at the sacred image, I perceive that it is a fake!

The idol has feet of clay; its lips do not utter wisdom; its breath is rancid; its intestines are diseased; it leers like a gargoyle. I was dismayed because I had been deceived; for once I too loved this idol, adorned in such alluring externals. I appreciate now the pregnant purport of the poet's couplet: "Where Ignorance is Bliss, 'Tis Folly to be Wise."

Almost everything in the world has been submitted to analysis, to investigation,—except Oxford. A conspiracy of silence has shielded it. Its monstrous pretensions and subtle dangers have been skilfully concealed.

Because of its assumption to be the World's Supreme Centre of Light and Learning, Oxford properly is exposed to that examination and criticism from which other communities may as rightfully claim exemption. The claim has been made times beyond all reckoning that "there is

PREFACE

only one Oxford ”! Oxford is the apotheosis of all that is excellent.

Oxford is as famous as the Great Pyramid. Millions of awe-stricken admirers have trodden its streets, gazed at its buildings, and trooped through its cloisters and ancient alleys with tears of reverence raving their hearts. Pilgrims proceed from the ends of the earth, from Asia, India, Scandinavia, Japan, from the Continents of Europe and America, not to mention Burnley and Stoke, just to look at Oxford. On such visits they are as emotional as multitudes at the Prophet's shrine at Mecca. (Recent rumour has it that the more pushful American carries a pocket-saw with which to cut off little chunks from the pews in Christ Church Cathedral; while it is a common sight in the season to see him stooping down at the Martyrs' Memorial to get a few fingerfuls of dust from the soil where the subversive bishops rightly were suppressed, to shew to his friends in New York and Washington.)

The pilgrims wander round in the care of recitative “ guides ” (with their tongues in their cheeks), who repeat the unctuous canards which sustain the immense Chimera whose alias is Oxford.

It has been reiterated *ad infinitum*, and, as I believe, *ad nauseam*, that Oxford is the standard-bearer of Light and Learning: a model for the world's emulation: the Queen City of Culture: an unfailing source of inspiration for all that is Classical and Heroical: an example for universal Manners: the Golden Boon for lucky youth! Not

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

the men from the Potteries, the Black Country, Liverpool or Newcastle, make England great; but the fine flower and perfect products of Oxford.

II

Oxford connotes an ideal in the world's mind. Here, in the "Queen City of Culture", you have something that is visibly precious, sacrosanct, wonderful. Other cities may be all right in their way (so say the citizens of Oxford); but Oxford!—Oxford is *par excellence*! There is no other place in the world like it; which is true.

Yet I prefer Wigan. In its cobbled streets, with its symphonies of clog-clad feet, there are cheerfulness and happy faces. On the perfect pavements in Oxford, where spats are plenteous, there are stony gazes on faces as immobile as the interrogation mark. Oxford is liverish, pompous and pedagogic; but Wigan is healthy, hearty and homely. In Wigan, two politicians will, if needs be, fight in the street in defence of their convictions; but, in Oxford, politicians will change their colour over a cup of coffee in a café. (The price of a vote is not high.)

It is time that all the carefully-guarded fictions, the cunning canards, and the fatuous panegyric propensities of hero-worshipping historians, with corns sprouting in their small craniums, were exploded; and a truthful portrait painted of Oxford's pretensions and perversions.

Visitors to Oxford never *see* Oxford. They

PREFACE

reach the city in a half-hypnotised state; and, thanks to the "guides" and the inn-keepers and waiters, they leave in a condition of complete hypnosis, from which they do not fully recover until a sea voyage, or a char-à-banc, brings them home again; with increased illusions about the "Dream City of Spires." All over the world these garrulous dupes circulate the mouldy myths and the canards they have, in their hypnotised condition, carried away with them. The result is, that Oxford citizens, never at any time of an humble or contrite heart, swell out more and more with self-esteem and swagger. They are so encased in layers and layers of swagger and snobbery that nothing can pierce their pachydermatous hides.

The thickness in the throat that threatens the visitor, as he moves slowly in Broad Street and the "High", is just the snobbery of the city seeking access to his tonsils. It is in the air; you can smell it on your handkerchief. Even the small starved sparrows of North Oxford affect a snobbish manner, as they hop hopefully from house to house, in search of crumbs that are not there.

The Oxford Preservation Society is striving to procure sufficient means to preserve ancient premises; and to maintain what are, euphemistically, called "the amenities of Oxford." Oxford's amenities!

Not in Manchester nor in Limehouse would a sightseer see a baser spectacle of "man's inhumanity to man" than the slums behind St Aldates. While the old dons dispute upon

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

Hamlet, or spill their pleasure over the pages of Plutarch, the children of the "Queen City of Culture" rot in the rancid squalor within a stone's throw of Christ Church.

("Learned gentlemen in crimson gowns, ladies in bright finery . . . memories of a *fête champêtre* in the beautiful gardens.")

III

Oxford has been boomed and boosted with Boswellian fidelity and Boswellian unction. To get their boys to Oxford, parents (within the present writer's knowledge) have made their lives a sacrificial hell; have held on with bloody sweat and homicidal intensity to "that great hope": made rags of what ought to have been their private peace of mind, in case they did not survive to see the triumph of their schemes!

Oh, Oxford is a beautiful city. The streets are well swept,—the public ones; the Bodleian bulges boldly in moonlight against the black mass of St Mary's Church; Magdalen tower and Christ Church are excellent examples of what sweated labour can bring from the void; and the grass in the college quads has the right depth of green. It is below her veneer where her viscous ailments thrive (to the eyes of a child a coffin may look a very beautiful object).

Oxford is the world's most polished coffin; the mausoleum to which youth brings its white sapience to be interred. Youth must learn to seal

PREFACE

up its enthusiasms ; sterilise its emotions ; eradicate its originality ; suck its fill from the poisoned paps of the old foul Mother of Culture, whose nipples renew her cherished types century by century.

Once I too knew the awe of Oxford. The fear of her was in my soul—poisoning it. Her poses and attitudinising ; her specious overlay of “ good form ” ; and, below all these, her insidious poisons and subtle corruptions.

Boomed and boosted ! *The Queen City of Culture!* The Superb Coffin, with its virile and contagious corpse within !

I have written from knowledge. *I have probed to the core of Oxford* ; both Town and Gown : and this record tells what I have found. No one else has ever so closely probed that twin core.

I too might have been an “ Oxford man.” It is still easy for me to evoke that first subtle thrill which came with the knowledge that I was to go to Oxford ! . . .

The sandy-haired professor, with a voice like a cracked bell, still stands before me, across the years, his face all sanctimonious and greasy with self-importance, exuding his fatuous interpretations of history. Nice, trite, pretty pieces of posh. So concise, so final, so Utterly like Last Words—these professorial dictums. Reducing, in his ineffable, banal fashion, some of the profoundest struggles in history to affairs no bigger than drunken squabbles at the cross-roads. Oh, ineffable, sandy-haired, punctilious, turgid, spunkless professor. Your successors do you credit.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

Said a man to me one momentous hour :
“ Oxford will kill all your enthusiasms, and turn you into a sapless old turnip. It will suck the blood from your brain ; and you will leave it no better than a corpse.” He just vividly hastened my apostacy.

He said, much better than I could have done, what in a few months I had only too acutely realised. And so those early happy hopes died in their disillusion !

I have regretted the disillusion ; but never the decision which followed.

IV

When the virtues and the excellencies of an Institution have been shouted in the ears of the world, with the immense assiduity that its disciples have devoted to the “ Classical City ”, investigation is inevitably invited.

What I have failed adequately to reveal can safely be left to the solicitous concern of The Oxford Preservation Society, aided by the urgent and distinctive, though always modestly-executed, literary devices of Mr J. C. Squire, whose interest in Oxford’s spiritual and material welfare was recently exposed, with characteristic æsthetic passion, in the pages of *The Observer*.

Of course, it cannot be gainsaid that Oxford confers certain indubitable advantages. To cite a mere judicial instance : A university youth, charged with the crime of theft, is a case for the pathologist ;

PREFACE

whereas a working class youth, arraigned in similar circumstances, is a case for the policeman. The one found guilty of stealing money is proved to be suffering from "subnormal development", and is put on probation: the other found guilty of stealing apples, is proved to be suffering from a "criminal tendency", and is clapped into jail, with hard labour. It was the famous Jowett of Balliol who stressed so much the importance of a sense of *proportion*. O Bravo our English sense of : : .

I know that my portrait is imperfect: much more could be said of Oxford; but, in the phrase of the late Mr Crosland, "there are things I might have said, and did not say."

In lighter vein, an interesting chapter could have been written, entitled, "Pride among the Priests." There is a plethora of priests in Oxford; and their tastes and fashions vary from an asceticism as stern as St Francis', to a love for beer as deep and profound as Mr Chesterton's.

Only in Oxford have I seen a clergyman (with a fine, if sad, profile, and an obvious passion for Plotinus) consume six pints of beer before lunch. This happy combination of interests evoked in one a feeling of love for the man. But there are other clergymen in Oxford who lead crusades for abstinence; priests who love to exhibit the Host, and priests who do not; priests whose trousers are pressed to a perfection beloved by the dandy; and priests who prefer their trousers to look baggy and beggarly, to demonstrate their delight in democracy.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

A section could have been furnished, full of rare particulars of Oxford's politics; for it is famed for its number of unseated M.P.'s. Such exclusions apart, here is an intimate and veracious portrait of the world's Most Massive Affectation; the world's greatest White Elephant.

Those who have passed the Sheldonian will have seen a circle of heads carved in stone, whose features seem to take on an increasing expression of cynicism as the years pass by. These silent "brethren of Broad Street" *understand*; and have always *understood*. The brethren whose mouths of stone gape ever wider in their mouldering satire; hastened to decay by all that their eyes have seen, and their ears have heard; but whose immobile lips cannot release them from the intolerable burden of all they know!

Could a miracle arouse them from their immobility, they would say of this book: "Yes! This *IS* Oxford: the *DREAM CITY*."

“There is pride in being a native of Oxford. Oxford is Oxford. There is no place like Oxford.”

“The cunning Old Mother of Culture! Sucking the spunk of the young, like an ancient spider draining the blood of flies.”

PART I

TOWN AND GOWN—UNRAVELLED

“I am no longer awed by institutions or persons. I am concerned only to discover the realities which appearances conceal.”

CHAPTER I

HALOES

I

CLASS distinctions in Oxford are as numerous as the legs on a centipede. And as active. A mere shade in the colour of your spats sets up a subtle social standard. In the "Queen City of Culture" it is not what a man *is* that matters. What matters is: What he *appears* to be.

There are no moral standards in Oxford. The possession of money, or the appearance of possessing money, excuses everything. In Oxford no one would even consider such tests as these: "Is his moral character satisfactory? Does he try to pay his way? Is he interested in politics? in public questions?" Such questions as those are "infra dig."

Among the essentials for "success" in Oxford, the following are profoundly important: Possessing (at least) one pair of plus fours; a répertoire of pornographic stories; some skill, legendary or otherwise, at golf; a Morris car; a sneer on your face; and an exhaustless capacity for suppurating self-conceit.

Oxford is sticky in its sanctimoniousness;

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

clammy in its smugness; and full of the sweat of its own swagger,—which explains why the climate is so persistently unpleasant. The haze which hangs in heavy layers over the city after midnight, at all seasons of the year, comes up from the recumbent, vaporous residents of North Oxford, whose bodies steam with pride and self-importance while they sleep.

Oxford is so full of vapours and so destitute of solids!

There are two endowed lectures at Oxford, obviously the gifts of a donor with a powerful ironic faculty; for the one is on Pride, and the other is on Humility.

There is no humility in Oxford. Even the numerous dogs, and the still more numerous cats, have a way with them that is distinctly in the grand manner. For the dogs disembowel neighbouring dustbins with that hauteur which is heightened by heredity; while the cats call in a concentrated self-conscious chorus that is classical and utterly “Oxford manner.”

There is no mistaking an Oxford dog or cat. The former is as analytical as Aristotle, nosing about for whatever will satisfy its inner-consciousness; while the latter loudly wails in crescendos which call vividly to mind the culminations of Newdigate prize poems. When either an Oxford dog, or an Oxford cat, is in repose, or sits up and looks at you, there is a smug expression on its face, as though it had just mastered the verb deponent.

The disciples of Dr. Saleeby, and the leaders of

HALOES

the Sexual Reform Movement, are rightly entitled to rejoice at such substantial evidence of Persistence of Strain, and the punctual profits of a belief in heredity.

II

The haloes woven about Oxford:—“ Dream City ”; “ Queen City of Culture ”; et cetera, are just the lyric ebriosities of hectic youths who have stayed too long where “ beaded bubbles wink at the brim.”

Much time is given to beaded bubbles winking at the brim in Oxford. During term, crapulous youths from Christ’s or Wadham (dodging the Proctors), “ in a fine frenzy rolling ”, will often stagger against one’s chair in the comfortable lounge at the King’s Arms, to hiccup up some stale banality by way of impressing you with their superior wit. No public place of refreshment is immune from the invasion of these mannerless, smug products of Eton and Harrow and other public schools.

In any other town or city in England these crude, offensive young persons would be taken by the scruff of the neck, their superior backsides well kicked, and forthwith ejected by hefty landlords. Yet these are the types whom the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul’s has publicly claimed as helping to “ carry on the fine old tradition of English gentlemen.” For similar disorders, a Durham miner (whom the Very Rev. Dean is often so pleased to

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

instance) would be seized by the police, hauled before the magistrates, and clapped into jail.

But the "beastly townees", as the townspeople are styled by the students of *Dream City*, take no offence at these crapulous disturbances. Instead, they are honoured if the "young gentlemen" so far condescend as to invite them to have a drink!

When the "young gentlemen" are seized with the malady which seeks relief in the massed disorder known as a "rag", neither life nor property is safe. True to caste, they promptly respond to the bellwether, moving in yelling masses along Cornmarket and the "High", drunk and ungovernable; while from their overhead rooms at college they have been known to hurl down lighted cigarettes and cigar ends, and even potfuls of urine, on to the heads of passers-by. When, in their massed diversion, they break up a train, or destroy hundreds of windows, they are not sent to jail. They are taken to the Proctors.

Oh, no! They aren't too "pertikler", the young gentlemen! They like to play their part in the Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature.

III

Culture is a dull dog. It isn't good for the cerebrum. Jackie Coogan is; and Harold Lloyd. Immediately on the resumption of term the cinemas are crowded nightly with urgent undergraduates, who come in their roomy, crinoline-sized trousers, to exult in the doings of the Krazy

HALOES

Kat, and all those profound problems propounded by Hollywood. A bawdy picture is intensely appreciated, for then the sharp-witted members of the university can indulge in appropriate loud asides, to the audible satisfaction of the "beastly townees", sexually stirred in the cheaper seats. The cinema. That is where Young Oxford takes life seriously.

Never were there so many *haw-haws* as may be heard now on the streets of Oxford. *Haw-haws* in the "High" are as habitual as hiccups in the Bullingdon. *Haw-haws* on the high note; and *haw-haws* on the middle note: each *haw-haw* exhaling a full savour of university superiority. Dancing, the "Flicker", golf, bridge, tennis, motor-cars, and constant chatter in the countless cafés. Such is post-war Oxford. Such the *Dream City*.

Sometimes publicly to impress visitors, spectacled undergraduates, resembling Harold Lloyd, will make loud comments, at a table in a café, on the spilth of clichés and split infinitives which rape the otherwise righteous pages of local newspapers. As they strike fiercely at these offending paragraphs, puncturing each solecistic lapse with a long blue pencil, you can see their small cerebrums are as mirthfully provoked as though they were about to applaud a weak profanity at a Fellows' dinner party. They suck up such simple solecisms with all the energy of a starved leech on a suppuration. By such industry they equip themselves for the larger literary life ahead.

Oxford a City of Culture! It is a great joke.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

IV

At the same time, justice demands that acknowledgment should be made of the virile literary qualities which distinguish the periodicals that circulate in university circles. Although an "Oxford man" can write such purist sentences as, ". . . it is him", and ". . . neither he nor she were", fuller quotation will reveal those imaginative and stylistic excellencies that would have thrilled the elegant eyes of Walter Pater, or the author of *Stones of Venice*.

Such quotable matter is, fortunately, quite accessible; and no more eclectic data than the Deity and the Cinema could have been selected by the undergraduate virtuosi, for a demonstration of their literary versatility. The two quotations that follow are taken from the chief literary undergraduates' magazine:—

OF THE DEITY:

"The Deity no longer honours Peckwater with his presence behind those windows of splendid crystal, and though he may be seen hovering fitfully round the gridiron club, who can tell where God may dwell? For who would care to ask?"

OF THE CINEMA:

"What is the use of criticising films in Oxford? Who cares here whether the production, the photography, or the acting is good or bad? . . . The habit of going to the 'Flicker' after Hall is as firmly rooted as that of trotting to the W.C. after breakfast."

HALOES

Who are they that will deny the pellucid promise thus evinced of another *Marius the Epicurean*, or *Path to Rome*?

Let the sneerers pass! Such virtuosity is extremely scarce; and is indeed approached only by those "reviewers" who fill the pale pages of *The Times Literary Supplement*, and glut their unsigned sapience in three-inch spaces.

NOTE.—In a recent article in the *Daily News*, Mr Robert Bernays, an Ex-President of the Oxford Union, exults in the triumph of the undergraduates over the authority of the dons. The following are typical passages: "It is impossible for a stranger to get a seat after eleven o'clock in any popular café favoured by undergraduates . . . undergraduates are forbidden to quench their thirst in licensed premises after nine o'clock at night. But here, again, the motor-car has made the rule ridiculous. 'Where shall we go for a drink—Bicester, Thame or Reading?' is the kind of question one now hears over dinner in Oxford Halls."

Also the motor-car enables undergraduates to "race away from morning lectures to London in time for a matinée."

Oxford—Seat of Learning!

CHAPTER II

MODERN MODES

I

OXFORD audibly excels in three clear achievements, viz. : In the number of its dogs ; in the number of its cats ; and in the number of its bicycles.

The gay girls from Somerville and Lady Margaret Hall have an obsession for bicycles. They are constantly cycling in the city, revealing a wealth of leg and an absence of lingerie that are a constant joy to the numerous old satyrs in strange check suits who have retired to Oxford to ease their asthma. When they are not cycling, little groups from their number often congregate at public bars, to conjure their cocktails with all that *sang-froid* which characterises a jolly old bird of the Old School.

And it is a pity that they do not stay at Oxford, for while they are up their beauty gives a lovely colour to the drab city. Almost all the undergraduettes of Oxford are beautiful ; and those who are not beautiful are at least good-looking. It is the rarest sight to see a scholarly-looking face among them, resembling, say, Christina Rossetti : or as though they had supped too long with Schopenhauer, or mastered too many of the maxims of La Rochefoucauld. They have not even that salty smile of superiority which character-

MODERN MODES

ises a female Fabian, strong in the knowledge that she has harmonised her rioting complexes, and suppressed in herself the wild impulses of a Wigan woman, or the caprices of her uncultured sisters in Burnley and in Stoke. The undergraduettes of Oxford are unscholarly and unspoiled, full of loveliness, vivacity, and flapper abandon.

When they depart, it is rare that one sees a beautiful woman in the streets of *Dream City*. Gone is the sparkling eye and rippling laugh! The threnody of "What's this dull toon to me" throbs in the memory!

II

No doubt this absence of visible female beauty explains in large measure the morbid, frustrated look so familiar on male faces. A really cheerful-looking fellow in the streets of Oxford is a sight so rare as to be phenomenal. He is nearly always a visitor, astonished at something he has seen in the city. There are more male mouths drooping at the corners in Oxford than in any other town in the country. Men look as if they were muttering the pseudo-consoling lines of Milton:

"Let us not aggravate our sorrows,
But to the gods, permit the event of things."

In Newcastle, Nottingham, Aberdeen and Wigan, where there is abundant female beauty, an atmosphere of perennial cheerfulness prevails. Men's mouths do not droop at the corners. Life looks worth while. In the *Dream City* there is a general look on men's faces as though they were

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

under duress of a daily lecture ; a sad, unsuccessable expression !

A celebrated actor, after visiting Oxford, suddenly threw up his hands and said : “ Oxford ! Oh, I cannot go there again ; that place repels me ” !

Æstheticians visiting Oxford acutely experience this sense of repulsion. The causes are both intangible and obvious. The obvious cause is the absence on the streets of female beauty. A beautiful, cheerful-looking woman is a tonic capable of dispersing every mental and bodily disability. So Wise Men have said. And Wise Men always know.

Not that large numbers of Oxford ladies are shy or home-loving. They aren't. Hour by hour they fill the cafés, smoking cigarettes, drinking tea and coffee, and throwing out a look of avid welcome at each male newcomer. Unlike the undergraduettes, these ladies *do* possess a scholarly look. They favour horn-rimmed spectacles, and, unless their gaze is reciprocated, remain as frigid as a Greek verb. Yet expert statisticians say that the major number of these mellowed nymphs possess that polished technique, and ease of access, produced by punctual practice only. Not here,—the virgins of Crotona !

There is no record of any Oxford lady having won a prize in a Beauty Competition ; and indeed no record of any entrants. So that the connoisseur in female beauty would have to search elsewhere. It is a pity : but not even gallantry can beguile the

MODERN MODES

palate into believing that the barberry possesses the succulence of the peach. Thus the truth must be braved!

Oxford ladies have charm; but it is concealed. Not with Keats would the connoisseur exclaim: "O the neatness of thy ankle, lightly turned"; but with Beaumont and Fletcher in their lament of ladies "well ankled and with two confident calves."

Unfortunately the ladies of Oxford do favour frocks two or three inches shorter than recent conventions of fashion, thereby too completely exposing the slow motion of unshapely legs; and bringing into a too-clear prominence the promontories of unsymmetric knees. Oxford ladies, in the majority, are too fully endowed with adipose tissue, disposed in width of waist, volume of calf, and robust ankle. They do not walk well, but progress at a speed, and in a manner, mournfully suggesting a martyrdom to rheumatism, corns, and contracted muscles.

Despite the subtleties of science, and the visible evidence of the chemist's art, Oxford ladies have not succeeded in eliminating the asperities of nature. Neither the alembic cup, nor the acid of the lemon, can check the epidemic of double chins; or make more alluring those spartan jaws and angular contours.

The ladies of Oxford rarely smile. Their charms are all concealed. Only the expert statisticians are able properly to appreciate the sapphic delights they can communicate below that stern, scholastic appearance.

CHAPTER III

THOSE CLASSIC TOUCHES!

I

UP to the year 1914 Oxford was still a city where one could count on a little privacy and peace. To get either privacy or peace now one must stay in the water closet.

Progress is proceeding at a wonderful pace. The old buildings are rapidly disappearing, but not in the backwaters where the slums abound. Multiple-shops, estate agents, café proprietors, and, of course, the drapers, are all desperately conducting campaigns for possession of the "High" and the "Corn." Woolworth's have already woven their ancestral glamour about the new modern building which has replaced the centuries old property, the Roebuck hotel, where many a charming barmaid was kissed across the bar by amorous magistrates just come from the bench, and romantic chief constables.

This new spirit of progress has percolated the City Council, with the result that the ancient corporation, so long sunk in civic *laissez-faire*, has awoken to its responsibilities, and, after much discussion, has driven the flower-sellers from the streets. It is a really important piece of local

THOSE CLASSIC TOUCHES!

legislation, that; and proves with what petulant speed City Fathers can make the wheels of progress move, once they make up their minds by majority vote. A real spirit of progress permeates the City Fathers now.

So much so that old Masters of Balliol, could they return from the Elysian Fields, would not recognise Oxford now. Except for the smells of her slums, which, of course, the Masters would easily recognise. These become more pungent as the years pass by. For odours so rancid that they would make a polecat retch, go to Oxford,—the “Queen City of Culture.”

II

Of course something may be done when the authorities succeed in getting the clocks in the city to synchronise, so that citizens may know what time o' day it is. At present no two clocks give the same time. Some do not go at all! A newspaper correspondent wrote of Armistice Day in Oxford: “The two minutes silence was rather marred by the irregular striking of all the University clocks . . . as soon as one stopped striking another began.”

Not even the clock at the General Post Office can be relied on. Sometimes it, like the slot machine for stamps, is static. When an irate gentleman complained that for three nights in succession he couldn't get stamps from the slot

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

machine, a post office officer replied that “they couldn’t ’elp it if there was a run on stamps.”

Undoubtedly the march of progress is at present impeded by the absence of a Liberal M.P. for Oxford. To vote Conservative in Oxford is as natural as copulation; but a Liberal candidate *has* got in. Mr Frank Gray (afterwards famous as the walking M.P.) got in. As reports shewed, he conducted a most vigorous baby-kissing campaign, and visited thousands of working class homes, in the disinterested propulsion of Liberal Principles. His persuasive smile shone on thousands of leaflets soliciting support for Liberal Principles. Mr Frank Gray got in; and within a few months went out: being unseated on a petition under the *Corrupt Practices Act*. The opportunity presenting itself so soon again, the electors of Oxford responded with the force of instinct; and returned a Conservative by many thousands majority. (All the same, no book about Oxford would be complete unless it included some mention of Mr Frank Gray.)

Although, therefore, not at present Labour M.P. for Oxford, readers are enabled to derive what erudition they can from the occasional educational contributions of Mr Frank Gray to the *Oxford Mail*. Many indeed consider that Mr Frank Gray would make an *ideal* M.P. for Oxford.

There *was* a Liberal weekly, the *Oxford Chronicle*. It died recently. Whither its soul has gone—assuming it had one—none cares; but its slender, emaciated body was absorbed by the old

THOSE CLASSIC TOUCHES!

Conservative weekly, the *Oxford Times*. It is said that the *Oxford Times* is now an "independent" political organ. It does not matter! Twice in recent times Oxford has had her M.P.'s unseated under the *Corrupt Practices Act*. Twice. The *Queen City of Culture*!

In Oxford, trousers are the most important part of a man's apparel, whether he be undergraduate or aspiring politician. An undergraduate needs wide, crinoline-shaped, trousers. Beyond his fee for the cinema, he needs hardly any money: he can get so much on tick. An aspiring politician—a candidate—also needs trousers of an arresting pattern: and much money in the pockets. Thus equipped either may take his way in triumph.

III

The outside world believes that as Oxford is such a wonderful place for books, residents must be great readers, and very learned. A disillusioned devotee wrote thus:—

"Never shall I forget that moment when I alighted from the train at Oxford station, and found myself in what I believed to be the most wonderful place in the world! How I had dreamed of getting to Oxford! So infatuated was I at that time with the name of Oxford; so great an admirer of its renown; so intense a believer in the knowledge it had to bestow, that I believe I should have felt little surprise at the sight of station porters reading the *Eclogues* of Virgil! At that time I felt sure that the very walls of the ancient city of culture oozed with knowledge! I was sure that Oxford people must be among the most enlightened in the world, considering all the knowledge they had at their disposal.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

“ One day I spoke to a bookseller, on whose shelves were thousands of books marked at low prices. Said I : ‘ I suppose you do a big trade with the townspeople ? I suppose Oxford people read a great deal ? ’

“ Blowing his nose with a gesture of derision, he exclaimed : ‘ Townspeople buy books ! Not likely ! The only people in Oxford who read books are the women, and the books they read are the drapers’ catalogues. Of course, the men read the betting news. But books ! Why you can hardly give them away.’ ”

This judgment may sound too sweeping ; but it cannot be disputed that, in the midst of its million books, Oxford remains a profoundly illiterate city. Its leading business men have no close working arrangement with King’s English. And the more illiterate they are, the richer they are. The City Council chamber and the Magistrates’ bench are constantly losing their aspirates, and playing the devil with their *hatches*. No one would notice these things were it not for the frightful self-importance that raises itself everywhere in the Classical City. The nicest people in the world know nothing of aspirates and split infinitives and the like ; but these nice people are utterly unself-conscious, and invariably get their living with their hands.

But if in your progress along the street you are bumped into by a wealthy Oxford business man, full of civic honours and judicial responsibilities, who tells you that he is “ running after his ’at, which ’as blown orf in the ’igh wind, as he was ’urrying to a meeting of the Oxford Preshervation Society ”, you wonder whether it would not have been better if, instead of giving £10,000 to endow

THOSE CLASSIC TOUCHES!

a Chair for Spanish in Oxford, Sir William Morris had applied some of his wealth to the founding of a Grammar Class for Oxford business men. Perhaps not! Better to preserve the Oxford that 'as been, is, and ever will be.

IV

As for the Oxford Drapers' Catalogues. Their pages are so peopled with be vies of beautiful ladies in varying alluring poses, in the much more suggestive than "the altogether", that these productions resemble abridged editions of an illustrated *Decameron*.

These Nonconformist drapers are constantly offering their goods at "ridiculous reductions", and at "clearance sales" improvised at short notice, thereby enabling themselves to increase their ever-growing premises; and the time seems not far distant when the authorities will have to demolish the colleges to make room for lingerie. It seems the ideal method of making the best of two worlds: practising a Nonconformist Conscience on Sundays and running a draper's business during the week.

Oxford builders also do well. They erect a few jerry-built bungalows and small "villas" in North Oxford (the ceilings crack and the interiors fall to pieces in a few years), and then they throw the bicycle away and get the little car, an' thank you, Sir.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

A few rare exceptions excluded, Oxford business men prefer anonymity. Oxford must hold the record in England for the number of dead names on its window signs. You ask for the name above the window, and the assistant looks at you with astonishment! Perhaps the gentleman you ask for died a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, it is wise in Oxford never to destroy receipts until the full expiration of statutory limits.

Again, a few charming exceptions apart, Oxford business men have neither manners nor energy. They move like automata; a heavy coma enwraps them. There is also an oily, unctuous atmosphere about commercial Oxford. A fawning, not-quite-fully-emancipated-batman manner.

NOTE.—In the University Magazine, *The Isis*, £250,000 is stated to be the amount of debts owing by undergraduates to the tradespeople of Oxford. *A Quarter of a Million Pounds!* The writer admits that “more innocent customers have to suffer for the sins of these guilty ones by paying prices that in any other town would be recognised as shamelessly exorbitant.”

£250,000 is fair evidence of the success of the Tick System in the Classical City.

CHAPTER IV

CLIMATE

I

THE climate of Oxford is notorious. A doctor said recently that it takes three years for a healthy person to get accustomed to its muggy atmosphere, although it is believed to suit bronchial and asthmatic sufferers. Undoubtedly the most energetic of all breathing things are the mosquitoes and midges, which thrive abundantly : although the numerous solicitors and chartered accountants also appear greatly to prosper. Although the population remains at about 55,000 only, there are nearly 80 doctors in practice. The chemists do a big business in tonics, blood-mixtures, and pick-me-ups, in what has been called this “wicked swamp.”

But there is something subtle and deadly in that humid air which cannot be explained in terms of physics! Students of the occult believe that the narcotising effects which the newcomer to Oxford experiences proceed from the emanations of swarms of spirits levitating in the invisible air, and sighing over the countless *lost causes* for which the University is responsible. The dons of Oxford are very, very proud of all the lost causes.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

(Once there was a phenomenal frost, which froze the Isis and the Cherwell : this piquant atmospheric abnormality provoked great epical fecundity in the poets at Keble, whose amazing Orphean output resulted in a sudden summons to the Poetry Society : but this “ conclave of melodious spirits ” was broken up by bold bands of Bacchic *Belial* men, who dispersed the soulful circle with stentorian cat-calls, loud jeers, and cumulative hiccups.)

II

The strongest in Oxford need tonics and pick-me-ups, fermented and otherwise. Sometimes there is a little sunshine in January, but seldom very much. In the months of February and March there are the mists and the mosquitoes. In April and May the midges dance in clouds, under sickly suns ; but the drapers issue their third catalogue of the year in May, once more offering “ an absolute clearance of stock, at ridiculous prices ” ! These purely philanthropic activities always attract appreciative crowds : June brings the visitors for the college balls ; and in this month also the odours in the slums near Christ Church Cathedral reach their most pungent power. But at the right distance from these smells, it is good to see the dancers taking the air, under the happy stars, on the perfect turf in Trinity gardens : the ladies in their diaphanous gowns, and the “ young gentlemen ” (their demeanour so correct, just

CLIMATE

now !) immaculately groomed,—their shirt fronts so beautifully white.

As Oxford residents say : “ Any old weather may come to Oxford during July, August and September.” But this is the period of the Long Vacation, when Americans come to see the Martyr’s Memorial, *The Light of the World* at Keble, Woolworth’s windows in Cornmarket, and generally to luxuriate in the World’s Intellectual Mecca.

Rains and mists and mosquitoes return in October, November and December : but the “ young gentlemen ” are “ up ” again ; the Bullingdon Club elects new members ; the ladies of easy virtue are back in the doorways of Broad Street ; the cafés, cinemas and dance-halls are filled to capacity ; and priests and populace turn their thoughts to the Festival of the Birth of Christ. Festivating the Birth of Christ is a really Big Business in Oxford, where there is no more sense of sin than there is in a beet-root.

Oxford gets various weather ; but one thing it never gets,—a strong, healthy wind, to blow the cobwebs away and rouse dull heads.

CHAPTER V

IF GOODNESS GREW . . .

I

IF goodness grew *pro rata* with the percentage of a community's places of worship, then Oxford should be a fertile field of holiness. Besides its eighteen churches, there are nearly as many chapels; and towering over all these small fry is the cathedral of Christ Church. Then there are other cults and semi-private "religious bodies" concerned with the saving of souls.

Oxford is full of devotional attitudes, incense and bell-ringing. Priests peregrinate all parts of the city. All that can *visibly* be done is done to evocate the indwelling spirit. Drapers direct Nonconformity; the churches exude the smell of incense, and are rich with ritualistic raiment, vestments and acolytes. Loudly the congregations proclaim themselves to be miserable sinners, confessing, Sunday by Sunday, that they have done those things they ought not to have done, and left undone the things they ought to have done. And five minutes after leaving the church they are back to their old ways again!

If Jesus chanced to walk in, in his sandals and dirty carpenter's overalls, he would be sneered at,

IF GOODNESS GREW . . .

if not ejected from the midst of these swagger congregations, who know nothing of the precepts that Jesus not only taught but practised. Jesus is just a target for them to fire their posturings at.

But the thing is done quite well, in the incense-smelling churches; and in the chapels directed by the drapers. But as for "miserable sinners"! They really don't mean they are ever naughty, you know. Not really! Not naughty as the people are in Newcastle and Newport, and low, wicked, and *uncultured* places like those in the North, you know!

II

Outside Bedlam there cannot possibly be such bells as break the peace of Sunday in North Oxford. And on weekdays also. The parish of Summer-town [*sic*] must hold the record in England for a persistent ringing of church bells. Hardly have the dawns of Sabbath days dissolved when the bells burst with clangorous sound over the recumbent residents. Aldermen, and the numerous solicitors, are ruthlessly roused from much-needed sleep. Ratepayers in arrears curse the bell, and go to sleep again. Worried tradesmen coin new oaths, in their enforced wakefulness, against arrogant recusants with long-standing accounts.

Only the subtle spinsters of North Oxford, considerable in number and strong in pride, evoke a subtle spinal pleasure from the sound of the bells, as they anticipate the thrill of early Communion

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

and the sensuous odour of the incense. It makes one feel very good to break the bread, and sip the wine, while yet the tall candles scintillate amid the shadows of the altar and around the very spacious stool of penitence. The subtile spinsters of North Oxford, on Holy Days, get all wet with spiritual sweat at the sight of the small Jesuses sleeping in their little comfy cribs.

The bells of North Oxford! Beginning sometime after dawn they are put in motion ten or a dozen times during the day. They are rung with damnable vigour. At their sound the dogs awake and howl in piteous competition. From the little charming King Charles spaniels, to the larger, legal-looking Alsatians, they rape the air with their peristaltic protests. God! How they howl!

Rumour has it that the dogs which howl the loudest, at the sound of the bells of St. Michael's and All Angels, are those on which the renewal of licenses is long overdue.

The bells of North Oxford! Their like exists nowhere. Edgar Allan Poe, an authority on bells, would have sunk down in a listless prolapsus on the instant of their outbreak. Their sound is enough to shatter a blacksmith's nerves, and bring protests from a beet-root! But they are accepted in North Oxford, where, fortunately, communal nerves lie far below the epidermis.

The young men of North Oxford do *not* go to church. They prefer, like Pepys, to pursue a piece of skirt, far from the dolorous bells that wail over

IF GOODNESS GREW . . .

their wayward wanderings. There are plenty of pieces of skirt to pursue in Oxford.

Unless they are in business, and are churchwardens, their fathers also refrain from church-going. They prefer a drink at the Club, and a good gossip.

III

North Oxford abounds with dogs and cats. Children are less plentiful. In consequence laughter is rare in North Oxford. Oxford women seldom smile, except for the priests. North Oxford glistens with superiority, spats and smart stockings. It is in the populous district of Saint Clements where the laughter of children is heard, as they play in the alleys and the gutters.

In the cemeteries, North and South, the worms are quite free from class-consciousness; animated by a single motive only. It is a chastening thought; but not pervasive enough to pierce the pachydermatous pride of Oxford's *bourgeoisie*.

Suburban Oxford is supremely satisfied with itself. It exults that it is not as others are. Its little cliques are fecund hives of scandal and pretence. In public: loud-voiced, tennis racket or golf club in hand, it brawls its self-importance. In private: it suppurates in its clammy smugness.

CHAPTER VI

THE FEAT SUPERLATIVE

I

THE Martyrs' Memorial was raised to the honour of the bishops Latimer, Cranmer and Ridley, whose subversive activities were terminated by an earlier indignant authority. But the residents of Oxford rarely associate the Memorial with those facts which brought it into existence. They like to think of it as a source of more savoury exploits!

The Memorial is a tall and fragile pinnacle; and, in its way, it is a rather pretty piece of workmanship. Plymouth Brethren and Strict Baptists have used it as a meeting-place for many vain appeals to the erring sons and daughters of Oxford.

For members of the 'Varsity it holds a different lure. To scale it is somewhat risky, needing courage and nerve. But at least once during term the feat superlative is achieved, and the Memorial is crowned with a piece of common-place toilet ware from an undergraduate's bedroom.

Certainly it is a more spectacular performance than writing a thesis for a degree in theology or philosophy. And it has that realistic quality so much approved of by the populace. The crowned Memorial is there for you to *see*. There is no

THE FEAT SUPERLATIVE

mental strain involved. For only that which can be seen, or heard, or touched, is appreciated in the *Dream City*.

So, a shining chamber-pot on the apex of the pinnacle of remembrance is a spectacle that charms the citizens, and excites applause. The glory that is Oxford is sustained.

Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer have long ceased to care!

NOTE.—Oxford undergraduates are changeless through the centuries! When Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer were on trial for their lives in 1555, in the Divinity Schools, it is recorded that “the Oxford Scholars hissed and hooted and laughed at him [Latimer], making altogether such a din that the divinity school looked more like a bear-garden than a scene appointed for the discussion of dogmas deemed essential to the salvation of men’s souls.” *History of England*.

A remarkable anticipation of Bullingdon Club activities in the year 1927 (cp. Exhibit No. 3, p. 111).

CHAPTER VII

BANQUET FOR BUS CONDUCTORS

I

THERE are more black looks on the buses on the Banbury Road than on any other bus route in Britain. Class consciousness lies in thick layers between Summertown and Carfax. None will own his or her neighbour. They sit with tight lips and sour expressions. An utterly glassy glare gleams in each turn of their eyes. You would never guess that God made man out of dirt and water, and woman out of a piece of the male rib.

Sometimes sharp words are spoken by women with tongues like spears when the bus conductor says that he hasn't change for a pound note, tendered to pay a twopenny fare. As if conductors could always be carrying bagfuls of change for pound notes! As however you get a free ride if there is no change for your pound note, there may be more in the method than meets the eye!

The bus conductors are weary, nerves-on-edge looking men. Many of them of youthful appearance are quite bald. It is no wonder! Twelve months continuous service on Banbury Road buses would have turned George Borrow's Flaming Tinman into a helpless neurotic. Mercifully,

BANQUET FOR BUS CONDUCTORS

Banbury Road busmen are given "rests" on the Cowley Road route, where they recuperate.

A visitor to Oxford, obviously deeply moved, thus records his impressions of travel on the Banbury Road :—

"Never were men hectored and harassed as are the Banbury Road busmen. They are browbeaten by elderly ladies, fractious dons, and self-conscious business men—apparently connected with the new motor industry at Oxford. They are argued with, and put in their places, over as small a matter as a penny fare. They are snubbed, and, metaphorically, reduced to pulp! They are told 'to make themselves familiar with the Table of Fares'; and that 'they will be reported at the office.' Nothing that a conductor does, apparently, is right for the super-snobs who proceed daily, from the backwaters of Banbury Road, to do a little shopping at Messrs Capes in St Ebbes, or Liptons in Queen Street. The conductors are targets for repartee. They are often trounced so badly that you can see their fingers tremble as they sort out a threehalfpenny ticket.

"My notebook is filled with the records of memorable disputes that have arisen among the passengers and the conductors, over such a trifle as whether it should have been a penny or a threehalfpenny fare. I have many drawings and sayings confusedly collected. The drawings I am sending to Mr Max Beerbohm; and the sayings to Mr Bernard Shaw; for incorporation in the works of these artists.

"My heart bleeds for these browbeaten martyrs on the Banbury Road buses. Worried and hectored as they are, only once did I hear one of them swear. He released a dreadful adjective; but it came out under great provocation. He asked a red-faced woman a question. 'Are you going to Carfax, Madam?' Receiving neither answer nor fare, he repeated the question. With a vivid colour on her large cheeks, the lady replied: 'I will thank you to address me as "Milady."' I am a lady of title.'

"The conductor went terribly red, and dropped some coppers on the floor of the bus. When the titled woman descended from the bus, the unnerved man spoke to me. 'What with the old professors ordering you about, and

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

the women snubbing you, it makes me feel an absolute *bloody worm*. I wonder what she'd have said if I'd told her I hold the O.B.E.? ' The conductor went on counting coppers into a small blue paper bag.

" The idea has occurred to me of raising funds for a banquet for busmen in the Oxford Town Hall. If my project is successful, I mean to do the thing well. It will make history. It will be talked of in days to come as we speak of the feast of Belshazzar! I personally have seen the good effects of banquets. Rural Deans and Bishops happy at the sight of whiskey and soda; County Aldermen and Labour M.P.'s at peace with the world, with port, liqueurs and sparkling Muscatel.

" The Town Hall will be a place of beauty. It will be festooned with flowers; the tables will be spread with the choicest viands. It will be a triumph for the *chef*, the cellar and the belly. This Carnival of Banbury Road busmen will be celebrated in history. Choleric clergymen, bad-tempered dons, and the haughty, huffy *nouvelles riches*, will be forgotten in another and another cup of the generous. Meanwhile, my prayers for these hectored, browbeaten men! "

II

In Manchester a man will rise and offer his seat to a lady, or to a gentleman obviously his senior. It is the rule there, as in all properly behaved cities, to form up in a queue and enter a bus in a civilised manner. Oxford pays no regard to such simple rules of conduct; and when the matter of queue-forming was raised, a Councillor retorted that " Oxford people would never stand such a new-fangled notion."

So, when you board a bus at Carfax for a journey northwards, you fight for your life! Petulant professors and ladies odorous as the eglantine, but whose eyes are invested with those

BANQUET FOR BUS CONDUCTORS

glassy gleams, will push and jostle you, trample on your toes, and flash out a look of contemptuous ferocity should you assume a competitive attitude for a seat. In this challenging congestion of ugly grimaces, and occasional acrid altercation, it must be confessed that it is the professors who win. One famous fat professor makes a practice of sinking down on the first available lap when in these daily skirmishes he fails to secure a seat. His weight induces the victim to beg to be allowed to stand! The professor's method is always successful.

Oxford has no manners. There is no rule of the road. You just push ahead, taking care that you are not pushed off the street by lolling groups of citizens of both sexes, or half a dozen undergraduates swinging along arm-in-arm. Slowly, perhaps, now that so many Welshmen are migrating to Morris's works, the "Queen City of Culture" will learn the art of simple politeness. At present it could successfully assert a claim as the rudest and most unmannered city in the kingdom.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OXFORD VOICE

I

THE "Oxford Voice"! Whence did it originate? It is a queer sound, sometimes even uncanny! But the three years which an undergraduate normally spends at Oxford would be well worth while if it taught him nothing more than that curious cacophony. It is impossible to say whether the "Oxford Voice" issues from the stomach or the lachrymal glands.

Strange that even Mr Galsworthy, who has considered it worth while spending so much time on the Soames, that smug unimaginative breed, so typically "Oxford manner", should have risked a mild satire of the "Oxford Voice"! In *Castles in Spain*, the author of *Island Pharisees* draws attention to the "*Bai Jove! Isn't it ráther naice?*" Ráther!

Mr D. H. Lawrence probes more intimately below the vocal screen and swagger. Thus, in *Pansies* :—

"When you hear it languishing . . .
the oxford voice
or worse still
the would-be oxford voice . . .

THE OXFORD VOICE

“ And oh, so seductively superior, so seductively
self-effacingly
deprecatingly
superior.
we wouldn't insist on it for a minute
but we are
we are
You admit we are
superior.”

The “ Oxford Voice ”! What *would* the boy
be without it!

II

It is a tenacious thing,—the “ Oxford Voice.”
It gives away the show! It marks a man off;
signifies a type; and specifies a mentality. As
Mr Chesterton once said: “ If a man sits in a
room without speaking, he may be Socrates, or just
a simple fool, for all his neighbour knows. It is
when he opens his mouth that he reveals him-
self.” It is when a man opens his mouth, and
emits the “ Oxford Voice ”, that you may know
an “ Oxford man.”

It is a cruel thing,—the “ Oxford Voice.” Yet
it is much sought after. The Rhodes Scholars
cultivate it; the members of Non-Coll. can usually
master it the while a Ruskin College student is
concealing his colliery trousers, so that, un-
embarrassed, he too may acquire it; and, of course,
the Oxford drapers all pursue it after they have
prospered sufficiently to expand their premises.
They always expand their premises!

It is a singular, significant, sinuous thing,—

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

the "Oxford Voice." Or it may be masterly, implacable, triumphal: and therefore inevitably remindful of Lord Birkenhead.

The "Oxford Voice" invariably implies certain trite and incisive collocations, exclamations, adjectives and nouns. Thus: "Whaut, *whaut*": and "Re-AL-ly." Or it is "MAËS-TER-LE"; derivation—Wadham. When he "fouls his corner", he's a "stink-KAR": a "stink-KAR bladdie." (Item: For more erudite research the reader is referred to Mr Robert Graves' *The Future of Swearing*. Mr Graves is an "Oxford man.")

The quintessence, the sublimated accent, the apotheosis of the "Oxford Voice" is, of course, exhaled through the Christ Church vocal curve; though Wadham drunk is almost as original in curious oral convulsions.

The "Oxford Voice" is a sound; and sound is a subtle essence. By sound the shepherd brings back to its place each unit that adventurously strays from the branded herd.

NOTE.—Mr St John Ervine first discovered and made known the existence of the voice that is *naice*, *refained* and *Oo Noo*. In the absence of a Glossary, the foregoing are Oxford's style of pronouncing "nice", "refined", and "Oh, No."

CHAPTER IX

RECEPTION OF VISITORS

I

UNDERGRADUATES have an adamantine aversion to new ideas; and to politicians who are not of the Carlton Club. But they have a chivalrous way with them in these matters; and never is their fine breeding and superiority shewn to greater advantage than when some politician whose name they dislike comes to Oxford. The slumbering savage emerges from his veneer.

Thus when the late Keir Hardie came to Oxford, just before his death, an old and ailing man, the massed ranks of the undergraduates in the Town Hall refused him a hearing. At a signal, he was made the target for a fusillade of eggs and tomatoes, which broke furiously on the body of the old man. He was led from the platform by the friends who surrounded him: he did not deliver his address. The defeat of the old man was a triumph for the University; and members laughed and cheered uproariously: but there are "Oxford men" to-day who have not spurned the honours available because there was once a Keir Hardie; honours that would not have been available if Keir Hardie had never

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

lived. Time has yielded that matchless and untarnished rebel many splendid, if belated, rewards.

II

When Jim Larkin followed a few weeks later, he was a very different proposition to the aged, and sickly, founder of the Labour Party. Larkin was a man of immense height and great physical strength. Gaunt, muscular, fearless: he did not seem a supine target for eggs and tomatoes! He looked what he had proved himself to be—a rough handful!

It was known that members of the University had completed their plans to kidnap Larkin: the city was thrilled with delightful expectancy! The plans did not mature!

At this time Larkin would be no more than forty: at the height of his powers, mentally and physically. His first words addressed to the undergraduates were: "That there were two things he could do equally well—fight or talk. He was not able to do both at the same time, so that if the undergraduates desired it, he would postpone the meeting and undertake to fight the best man they could produce from themselves. Or he would talk; whichever they chose. But he would submit to no interruption if he talked, though very willing to answer questions at the end of his address." He asked them: "Did they wish him to fight? or talk?" He added that "he had just come out of

RECEPTION OF VISITORS

prison, and expected he would soon go back again. And if any one attempted to treat him as Keir Hardie had been treated, a few weeks earlier, there would be a bloody nose or two ”!

The undergraduates sat still, and Larkin commenced to speak. For over an hour the speech went on without a sign of interruption. The 'Varsity had met its Waterloo; and more! For surely never did its massed ranks listen in silence to such a deluge of realistic, satiric rhetoric.

Larkin made the Dublin slums live before them. He brought to their nostrils the very smells of its slums: he pictured its starved children, consumptive mothers, and horribly overcrowded hovels. The grime, foulness, and all the bitter suffering; the indifference of the authorities; the sweaters, the usurers: all were vividly and terribly portrayed by a speaker whose eloquence was genius.

It is certain that no such indictment was ever listened to in silence in Oxford. Having pointed out that, for saying these things, he had been imprisoned several times, Larkin began a terrific onslaught on the apathetic minds and consciences of spoon-fed young men who, when they left the University, did not offer their lives for social service, and risk poverty and imprisonment as rewards. He challenged them to say why, in God's name, they should enjoy advantages without liquidating their debt to the common people, from whom such advantages were derived.

“ Mere accident of birth, just luck,” shouted Larkin, “ that you young fellows are here, pap-fed

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

with sport and comfort, and not hewing coal, cleaning drains, or spitting blood in a slum. Thank God every night on your knees that you are where you are, and not rotting in jail for speaking the truth.”

When he had lashed his listeners for over an hour, Larkin sat down, his face streaming with sweat. The 'Varsity awoke from its amnesia and gave him a prolonged cheer.

III

Not that such a speech as Larkin's would matter in Oxford! Her "culture-streams" run too deep for diversion at the hands of unorthodox direction. Besides, it must be remembered, in justice to Oxford, that the working classes generally resolve their lives in grooves that lie apart from the effects of such "culture-streams." Their mental and physical activities are so utterly corrupted by an obstinate persistence in repeating the same thing over and over again, day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year, that it seems centuries must still pass before any "cultural-process" can penetrate the perverse progress of their lives.

Inter alia: The working classes are so addicted to routine, so vitiated by a "work-complex", an unæsthetic obsession for sticking to one job for as long as they can hold on to it, that one perceives the insuperable difficulty of persuading them to model their conduct on the example of the

RECEPTION OF VISITORS

Bullington Club. (Exhibit No. III.) The lower classes are so prone to practise those ancient precedents whose existence is symbolised in the police, that there seems little likelihood of any immediate movement on their part to strike out towards the general superiorities illustrated by the *Five Exhibits*; and so to induce in themselves what the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's, in his typically modest manner, has claimed for university youths, carrying on " . . . the fine old tradition of English gentlemen."

Simpler methods than Oxford can give must first be exerted. If only it were practicable, in the national interest, to publish several million facsimile portraits of the Right Hon. J. H. Thomas in (a) Privy Councillor's Robes, and (b) Evening Dress Suit, the working classes might then visibly be brought to realise the 'igh 'eights attainable via 'ome-circle classes; where each 'umble proletarian 'ome could be rendered susceptible, if not to the advantages of the Stock Exchange, then to that " culture-stream " which carries its passengers to the zone of Cabinets; to utter panegyrics in the chair which Johnson sat in, in the *Cheshire Cheese*; or, at least, to a Fellowship at Christ Church, with leisure to bring out another little *Life of Napoleon*.

All this will, of course, take time. In the meantime, the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's must be encouraged to pursue his weekly journalism—in the interregnum of supporting Christ at £1,500 a year—on behalf of the Durham miners, and the working classes generally, whose causes (like a good

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

Christian) he so passionately has at heart. For it is certain that the Very Rev. Dean's activities will do more for his humbler brothers (in Christ we are all one) than Oxford.

And if the working classes will persist in their obstinate obsessions, descend three thousand feet into the earth's bowels, hold their noses over drains, and go on doing daily the dirty work for the superior people—Very Rev. Deans, authors, artists, and Oxford dons—if they refuse to be psycho-analysed, ridded of their “inferiority complexes”, and “refained” to a protoplasmic splendour: then, in that event, the working classes must be eliminated, and the superior people compelled to hew their own coal, and clean their own drains, under the remorseless rigour of Mr Bertrand Russell, or the plastic, statistic patter of Baron Passfield (the Mr Sidney Webb that was: he who in such poignant paragraphs pronounced against a Second Chamber—before he got his title).

IV

When the Miners' General Secretary visited Oxford in the early stages of the Great Lock-out, masses of undergraduates, unable to gain admittance to the Corn Exchange, surrounded the building and howled. They threw grit and pebbles at the windows. They sent up flares, miaowed, blew whistles, and yelled the National Anthem. So great was the uproar that it was impossible to hear a word of what the speaker said.

RECEPTION OF VISITORS

A large number of citizens were present to hear what the Miners' Secretary had to say, for even in Oxford the possibility of personal suffering is capable of exciting a fleeting interest in current political happenings.

The speaker was endeavouring to explain the progress of those events which had led to a national *impasse*. But undergraduates did not want to hear anything *explained*. What the Miners' Secretary had to say would not interest them. When they went down, it would not be down the pit to hew coal. They weren't interested in the lives and conditions of miners. Miners! A low breed of men; men of another race! Parasites! Bolshevists! They knew all about the miners. Did not they read what the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's had to say about miners? Or had heard their fathers say what the Very Rev. Dean had said. The Dean of Durham, and the Dean (*Very Rev.*) of St Paul's: fine fellows these, who knew all about Christianity and conditions of mining life.

The undergraduates knew how to throw tomatoes about in the hall; make wild noises; and break up the meeting. Splendid! So careful of tradition; so true to type. Such useful members of the 'Varsity and Society.

CHAPTER X

ACCORDING TO PATTERN

I

“ THERE is pride in being a native of Oxford. . . . There is no place like Oxford.” There is so much going on, all the time! So much backbiting and internecine gossip. The social life of the *Dream City* seethes with tales and lewd innuendoes. The women gossip on their way from church and chapel; and outside the grocers’ and chemists’ shops the wagging heads disperse the sanctities of their neighbours. But as each talks in turn about the other, the result is an equilibrium. The women are never too old to gossip.

The men do the same in the clubs, and on the sports grounds, where conversation is just a perpetual process of post-mortems on private reputations. Prestige may be lost over a bottle of Bass, so swiftly are conclusions formed in these pestiferous mausoleums in the “Queen City of Culture.” No city in the world can possibly suck so much pleasure out of passing rumours. Rumour is Oxford’s vital breath. It is amazing with what ease and irresponsibility conversations of the most libellous character are noisily indulged in. On the bowling greens, as well as in the billiards rooms, players will interrupt the progress of a game loudly to interpolate a story that elsewhere would ruin a

ACCORDING TO PATTERN

man. Quite "responsible" business persons, as soon as the pubs are opened in the morning, go panting from parlour to parlour, tugging at your coat, grinning and inquiring if you "have heard the latest one about old Harry or young Dick?" It is presumed that everybody knows old Harry and young Dick! The whole matter is dissolved in loud chuckles; and as likely as not the victim of the story is the next nominee for the presidency, or a place on the selection committee, of the club. *This is Oxford.* The world's chief gossip shop and scandal manufactory.

II

In the "Queen City of Culture" *esprit de corps* is unknown. Sport is at a low point. But what the *Queen City* lacks in sport she makes up in stories: strong bawdy stories. "Ah!" Your native's face lights up! You may always know an old Oxford resident by that singular, elongated "Ah." The long a is used: it is the equivalent of the 'Varsity "*Bai Jove.*" It is uttered with the savour of a smirk, its implications being sexual. It means that the first spokesman has a new bawdy story to tell. "Ah", and the air is smutty and savoury: for, in the manner of the author of *Ulysses*, the action of these Oxford stories invariably takes place in the rear.

Oxford loves her dirty stories; and the loudest laughs are those which follow the telling of a tale where adultery among friends is more than implied.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

(In the "Queen City of Culture" many an unsophisticated youth has heard the word *sodomy* for the first time in his life. It were better for many a bright clean lad that he should drain a phial of prussic acid rather than be fated to go to Oxford, afterwards to fester for a lifetime on the deliquescent poisons which his blood draws out of the incestuous stomach of Alma Mater. . . .)

As for Oxford's increasing *nouveaux riches*! They are wonderful persons, these! Until quite recently they pushed their way on a bicycle (although, even so, their heads were thrown back at an angle of brilliant hauteur). *Now*: they have the car! On Sunday mornings, loudly they sound their horns as they bring the cars from the hired garages to the front doors. They sound their horns several times, so that their poorer neighbours should hear them going away to Godstow or Woodstock (the ghost of Sir Walter Scott sometimes punctures tyres on their way to Woodstock!) for a drink before *lunch*: whaut, *whaut*. They all use the same make of car. Same chassis: same wheels: same foot-space: same paint: same upholstery. If a piece falls out of the "old bus", there's millions more of similar pieces at the Works. *An'* they do the whole dam distance at 45 m.p.h.

Always blowing their horns in one way or another, Oxford's *nouveaux riches*: and those who are not, but hope shortly to be of the *nouveaux riches*.

ACCORDING TO PATTERN

III

The chief characteristics of a normal native of Oxford are: *Docility and humbleness in the presence of his betters*. And they are all his betters who have more money than he. Or they are dons. No native-born resident of Oxford would ever dare dispute the word of a don. If contradicted he will touch his hat, say "yes, Sir", and slink away. He knows his place! To understand this unique communal psychology reference must be made to origins.

For centuries the citizens were as dependent on the University as infants on the pap. Their sole source of subsistence was service as batmen to the undergraduates, cooking and carrying their food, making beds, scrubbing floors and cleaning chamber-pots and duties contingent thereto. Unless sanctioned by the University these menials hardly dared to breathe. This castrated, chamber-pot-spirit was transmitted by the irrefragable laws of heredity to their successors. (The professors are great believers in and exponents of the Laws of Heredity!)

Large numbers of citizens are still similarly employed to-day. (The authorities dare not allow working women in the rooms of the "young gentlemen.") Although conditions have improved monetarily, many now having their mortgaged semi-detached six-roomed suburban villas, Morris cars and King Charles spaniels—and certain *war-*

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

starred clerks their O.B.E.'s—hat-touching, yes-sir-ing, and kicked-backside servility are still as rife as ever. Not even North Oxford's perfected science of showing-off can successfully conceal the sudden indiscretions of a powerful heredity.

Independence of thought, there is none. What the University says is law. If it is believed that you "think independently", in the *Queen City of Culture*, you are regarded as a crank. To utter a few individual opinions is to be suspected of plotting against the Crown. Keep close to type and you are safe: the priest will bury you without fuss. Depart from type and you are damned! The social life of Oxford is so sodden with servility: so mentally backward: so steeped in slavish submission to authority and rule, that to rouse it from its stupendous torpor would be as easy as turning a tortoise into a missel-thrush. *Oxford is Oxford*: that has got to be understood.

Your normal native resents being asked to use his brain. The strain might indispose him, so he never questions the rightness or wrongness of things. Ask him for reasons and he sulks. (The *war-starred* O.B.E.'s throw up their heads with superior disdain, or look down at their white spats.) He is loyal to the centuries and accepts authority. He is the last link of the feudal age. Outwardly modern with his Morris car, a feudal fear is in his eyes and in his soul.

In which comatose condition he is happy. Not that he envisages his state as comatose or mentally sterile. On the contrary he is, and knows he is,

ACCORDING TO PATTERN

a citizen of the "Queen City of Culture." The world comes to visit him ; to cast sparkling eyes on those cherished colleges whence knowledge comes.

Lectures are frequent in Oxford. From talks on the Ethical Values of the Great Pyramid to Vitamines and Vegetarianism, there is a plethora of public education. Always however the same people attend the lectures. They are composed of a few acrid spinsters, supported by a little knot of elderly men, hard of hearing, who sit and hold their hands to their ears. The young in Oxford never attend a lecture. They would prefer being imprisoned with belladonna plasters covering their backsides.

Since however a new spirit of progress has percolated through to the Council, an Alderman "who didn't oughter to do it" will perhaps present members of the corporation of the Classic City with copies of *Simple English* and *Webster's Dictionary*. Then, as Mr Arnold Bennett would say, Oxford will be "motivated." But not yet.

CHAPTER XI

IN ANNUAL DESHABILLE

I

THE really Big Thing in the life of *Dream City* is St Giles' Fair. For two days in the first week of September Oxford is *en fête*; and all running over with riotous delight amid the cocoa-nut booths, the tent containing Europe's Fat Woman, Professor Schublentiz the Fortune-teller, the swings, the Ugly Man from Borneo, the machines where, for a penny, you can see a series of lascivious pictures, the Roundabouts and the "Forty-stone Man": *at the Fair all Oxford gathers*. Then you may see the "Queen City of Culture" *en déshabillé*.

For two days in the year all class distinctions are forgotten; the public houses are permitted to remain open for an extra hour at night; and one must not be fearful at the sight of fornication in exposed places; because, dam 'e, Sir, St Giles' Fair comes but once a year.

From George Street to St Giles' Church, the whole vast space is filled with an amazing congeries of Merry-Go-Rounds; engines which snort and throb like instruments from Bedlam; loud, raucous-voiced men yelling their special attractions; the

IN ANNUAL DESHABILLE

roar of the mechanical bands; the tootle-tootle of the twopence-a-ride-motor-cars-for-two; the coloured balloons' bazaar; the retching air, heavy with petrol and oil; and the cheap jacks at their stalls, disguised with false hair, disposing of watches and other glittering wares, with skilful words and persuasive methods that thrill the enraptured spectators.

All Oxford crowds together at the Fair: the dons from the neighbourhood of Bartlemas Road; distillers from Botley; shy men from Shipton, and *demi-monde* from St Ebbes: from the "highest to the lowest", they are all to be seen at the Fair. If Paradise Square and Lower Hincksey preponderate in their numbers in the naked light of day, Portland Road and Lonsdale Road are generous in their patronage after the setting of the sun. The crowds are bigger then; more and more tightly the thrilled bodies of both sexes (the gentler sex prevailing after sunset) are massed together; and it is very pleasant to the epidermis to push one's way amid such charms at sundown. The engines and the spouting petrol fumes; the clanking and the uproar; the thunderous noises of this Hades, in the centre of the "Queen City of Culture": in its presence and pleasures the soul of Oxford exults.

II

For seven hundred years the Fair has thrilled the citizens. Once, a bold Progressive, who was

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

noted for his diet, his alternate love for a green suit (with a red carnation for a buttonhole), or brown plus fours, with pink garters shewing, pleaded in the local papers for the extinction of St Giles' Fair. He based his plea on the assumption that we had arrived at a period in Modern Progress when such primal passions as were provoked by excited people should be by law suppressed. He instanced the stench, the noise, the microbes, the dangers to health in overcrowding; the stirring of sexual passion at an age preceding puberty; the loud lewd laughs of the elderly lascivious; fornication at the fences near Little Clarendon Street, Blackhall Road, and the by-ways leading to Keble and Balliol colleges; and the excessive drunkenness resulting from a concession in the licensing regulations. With pith point and epigram he pitched into the people who supported such a primitive and pungent survival of the Middle Ages as St Giles' Fair.

He was strong in the belief that he had Progress on his side; and that the cultured populace of Oxford (in his innocent, simple heart, he guessed these composed nine-tenths of the community!) would crowd to his support.

Never did that Bold Progressive break so foul a lance with fortune! He was denounced, upbraided, mocked and sneered at; and made the object of more lurid adjectives than would fill the space required for the Book of Jeremiah. Oxford rose against him in its corporate wrath, and spifficated the city's super-Killjoy.

IN ANNUAL DESHABILLE

So, in September, residents and old residents, forgather at the Fair, to “bang into each other; have a good booze; and a bit of skirt.” Bits of skirt are always amply available at any season of the year in Oxford.

When the Fair is over, the citizens again relapse into their class distinctions, their spats and superiorities, and their Morris and Austin cars.

CHAPTER XII

BEHIND THE SCREEN

I

OF Oxford's slums, a writer to the daily press says :—

“ SLUMS IN THE QUEEN CITY OF CULTURE

“ Then there is ‘ Paradise.’ This area was once a smiling garden, round about an abbey that long ago disappeared. Near by the keep of the old castle still frowns upon it.

“ Paradise Square is the centre of it; and here the houses are fairly good, but divided up and shockingly overcrowded. Issuing out of the square in every direction are narrow streets of poor houses, many very old, patched and patched again to keep them from falling down. Out of these streets run still narrower alleys and courts, wet and clammy nests of misery in wet weather, and stifling forcing-houses of infantile complaints in summer.

“ The most abject and the most helpless in its misery is Paradise Place, a row of eight or nine narrow habitations, each of two or three tiny rooms, one above the other. One tap in the common yard furnishes the water supply for all. There is one ‘ convenience ’ for every three houses. In one habitation of two rooms, each less than nine feet square, there ‘ live ’ two parents, a grandparent and seven small boys. The rent is 4/6. In the three tiny rooms of another ‘ house ’ are two parents and three children, paying 5/-.

“ Church Place, Penson's Gardens and Church Street furnish equally depressing examples. A poor harassed mother, with a six-foot son and two growing daughters, had to sleep in an attic room that would hold nothing besides the two beds; small wonder that the boy ‘ coughs

BEHIND THE SCREEN

all night', for the amount of cubic air space for the three occupants is not enough for one.

"In another tumbledown place a middle-aged man has had to divide his wretched dwelling into two parts of two tiny cubicles each, to accommodate a daughter and her husband. The rent is 4/3, the 3d. being added, no doubt, as consideration for a 'garden' that is overshadowed by a new motor-shed which effectually disposes of the light that should belong to it.

"And there are other dreadful examples in this ironically named area. A further and pathetic fact is that the corporation has a branch office of the public health department near by. What the public health department does for the inhabitants of Paradise Place, for instance, is one of the Eleusinian mysteries."

II

Oxford! THE EDUCATIONAL LIGHT OF THE
WORLD!
Fair City of Dreaming Spires!

CHAPTER XIII

MODEL SONS OF ALMA MATER

I

How beautifully loyal they are, to their old Alma Mater, the true sons of Oxford. If once the old harridan lays a strong hand on you, in your youth, her bond-slave you will remain to the end! The old trollop's nipples are slack, but they continue to yield a subtle milk. . . .

There was her son with the long hair and the flaming red beard, who would come to the Martyr's Memorial and address a shifting crowd in Latin. Parenthetically, he sometimes introduced a sentence or two of English, when it was gathered that the times were out of joint; society had become obese, and was perishing in its own sloth; while socialism was hovering over its body like a vulture about to seize its prey.

Horace and Virgil; the Song of Solomon; and the Eumenides of Æschylus were drawn upon in the course of these learned harangues. The proletarian part of the crowd stood by agape, understanding nothing; only a few pale undergraduates from Balliol absorbed the Latin, and appropriated each classic reference, with their well-known "effortless superiority."

MODEL SONS OF ALMA MATER

The man with the flaming red beard hectors his listeners. Often he gets so impassioned that his beard is all sprayed with spittle. Then he waves his arms; flourishes his notes; and, suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, steps down from the base of the Memorial, and, with swift strides, and a palpable sneer on his sweating checks, hurries away from the mystified, harangued crowd.

An ideal son, this, of his Alma Mater.

II

There was the well-known professor who changed his socks once a month. Punctually, once a quarter, he visited his hosier in the "High", and ordered three pairs of white socks. It was a *sine quâ non* that they must be "the same as before": thick, white, woollen socks. These the professor conveyed to his bachelor rooms. When the professor put on a pair of new socks he wore them for a month. Then he took them off and threw them into the fire. He was a punctual professor: he threw his discarded socks into the fire every fourth Friday evening—before dinner.

The professor had a contempt for the pusillanimous character of modern times. He was a representative of an earlier school of thought. He despised braces and wore round his immense stomach a wide leather belt. He believed in beer, tobacco and books. And he could eat a substantial

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

meal. His favourite dish was a savoury containing twenty eggs, blended with suitable spices. A chicken at breakfast was enjoyed, during long spells of reading. Thus physically fortified, he would burrow down into an immense easy chair and read continuously until dinner was served at seven o'clock. Anybody seeing the professor during these hours would have found him surrounded by piles of books in several languages, lying about in chaotic heaps. Dense clouds of tobacco-smoke floated about the student, who, summer and winter, declined to have a window opened.

The professor was exempt from the frailties of conventional people. Unless and until his face and beard were seared with the stains of many meals, he never washed. He despised the bath; and for forty years he had not bathed. He believed that in a healthy body the pores possess sufficient power to discard waste matter, without recourse to artificial means. That these eliminating processes were continually at work in the professor's skin was perfectly patent to any one who took a chair beside him in the Union! There was always an odour of decaying lilies exhaling from the professor's person; but he lived to be nearly ninety and died peacefully.

III

There was no more regular attendant at a lecture, or political gathering, than the well-known

MODEL SONS OF ALMA MATER

gentleman who always put one plain and simple interrogatory to the speaker. No meeting was complete without this vigilant personage. He had a high and broad forehead; a round ruddy face; and a nose of perfect aristocratic Roman curve. He sat upright and looked straight at the speaker. During the address he maintained an attitude of absolute neutrality. Under his decorum it was impossible to say where his bias lay. He gave no sign of assent or condemnation. Whether the subject-matter was *Æsthetics* or *Politics*, he revealed no latent prejudice. Others might become uproarious under the spur of Party slogans; but the well-known gentleman remained immobile under these vocal vulgarities. His was utterly "Oxford manner."

Not until the speaker's voice was silent did he make a stir. Then he rose. Always he put the same question; in the same shrill voice. Pointing an accusing forefinger at the platform, the well-known gentleman desired to know if the speaker could tell him: "*Who is John Bull?*" He once asked Mr Hilaire Belloc that question. Mr Belloc answered concisely: "*You are.*"

IV

Another example of superb devotion to the Ancient Mother was the old Clerk in Holy Orders, wealthy, florid-faced, big-bellied, and fond of his

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

food and wine, who lived in London but had bouts of terrific home-sickness for his old college.

Sometimes this nostalgia seized him when the duties of his office prevented his being out of London for more than a few hours. But there was no resisting these attacks! The milk of the Old Mother moved! So he came from London to Oxford merely to lunch; returning home again in time for dinner. He would do this for days together.

How delighted he always was to be in Oxford again,—if only for a few hours! Here he was at home. After his lunch he looked about for some one to talk to. He wanted to repeat the opinions he had so often expressed before. He was immensely impressed with the difference in the men who were “up” to-day, from those who were “up” in his time. Those were the days! When Oxford *was* Oxford.

As he warmed to his subject the old Clerk stressed his conviction that the men of to-day were an altogether softer-bellied race. They had no stomachs. To-day, undergraduates got crapulous on a pint of bitter, or a *crème de menthe*; grew peevish and splenetic and wanted to join the Labour Party. In his day they thought little of polishing off a bottle of port before lunch. Now it was that newfangled concoction, a “gin and its”! A 'Varsity crew in his time was not winded and panting at Putney Bridge. Oxford would never win the Boat Race until there was a definite reversion to the men of his time.

MODEL SONS OF ALMA MATER

The men of to-day were satisfied if they could get a sweat by doing a turn in Addison's Walk, circling The Parks, or running the car up Cumnor Hill; with tea in the Cadena, beside a shingled girl from Somerville or St Hilda's, where they squeezed hands under the table, and talked about the "Flicker", or what was in the *Isis* or the little *Cherwell*. With all these women about, Oxford would never win the Boat Race. Women were women, and, as such, had their place in the world; but that place wasn't at college! (And the women were sappier in the old Clerk's day: they did not use so many emollients then.)

The men of his time thought nothing of running between Keble and Kidlington, or from Brazenose (where his brother was) to Blenheim; having a strong country woman, working in the fields; and back to rooms in the interval of lunch and early tea. Cambridge? Bah! Oxford at that time could win by any margin they wanted. Where were such men to-day?

The mention of present-day politics brought a stern look into the old Clerk's eyes! Gone was that charming bonhomie! One could imagine the bristles rising on the old man's back. He pulled himself up into a combative posture. His large hands grasped more tightly the arms of his chair. The milk of the Old Mother was stirring in his veins! The precepts, the antipathies, the old, deep purblind prejudices, that he had so vigorously sucked from her poisoned paps, in undergraduate days, awoke to his aid: he would remain a loyal

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

son. His political principles could be summarised thus: "Working men had too much leisure. *His* way would be to increase hours of labour. Too much leisure was an evil for working men. It gave them time to *think*. Except for the educated, all thinking was bad. It was for the educated to think, and for working men to obey."

Such typical, superb sons of the Old Mother, these.

NOTE.—The profound educational value of *The Cherwell* can be partially grasped from the following extracts taken from an article by the Editor:—

"For the benefit of those who are ignorant of the fact, Schools take place towards the end of this term. That means to say, that one-third of the University is miserable, in fact, and the other two-thirds miserable by association. It requires the Summer Term to prove unexpectedly that doing something is even more unpleasant than doing nothing. . . . As you observe, *The Cherwell*, as the leading newspaper of the University, has been appointed the official organ of the Froth Blowers. . . ."

The Editor of *The Cherwell*.

CHAPTER XIV

EMBRYONIC STATESMEN

I

AT the Union debates young "intellectual Oxford" preens itself and promenades in carefully-polished speeches, thrown off in the manner of impromptus. These young men are the nation's future governors and statesmen; and they look exceedingly attractive in their immaculate evening dress, as they rise to discuss potential legislation for miners, bricklayers and blast-furnace workers. They have dined well; they are sartorially unimpeachable; and their set speeches on regulating hours and wages are spoken in those *refained* (Mr St John Ervine will forgive the plagiarism) tones which permit of neither solecism nor split infinitive.

As their tremulous tones vibrate through those classic corridors, with an arm sometimes swung at the correct angle, a vision comes before the mind of Churchill (the statesman with the funny hat), standing in front of the looking-glass, swerving his fist to right and left as he practises the delivery of those puncturing phrases which have so purified present-day politics.

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

Above the heads of the Union debaters are the pretty faces and responsive bosoms of bebies of undergraduettes, who look down in admiration from the gallery. The setting is just perfect. No wonder that the debaters drive clenched fists into open, white palms with a devilish emphasis whose echoes ring through the House!

Only, when Bottomley visited the House they gave him a majority as readily as they did the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's. These post-prandial entertainers are so very courteous. Our National Leaders must receive the imprimatur of merit from the House.

II

The Motion on potential legislation for miners, bricklayers and blast-furnacemen is sternly debated. The rehearsals in front of the looking-glass are now consummated *de haut en bas*. All emotion, all sentiment, is most meticulously suppressed. An exposure of these is bad form. A *gentleman* avoids them. He beats upon the white palm of his left hand, or lightly taps the tips of his long artistic fingers. But such motions mean no more than colons, semicolons, and full stops. They are the bloodless beats of good-going Robots.

O those gestures! The terseness of those onslaughts! The thrusts at the despatch box! The power of the opening, the middle, and the perorating argument! The George Moore purity

EMBRYONIC STATESMEN

of the syntax! The preciousities! The bitter repartee! The careful and well-timed stutter that presages the pregnant epigram! It is no wonder that the whites of old Gladstone's eyes, in their effigy near the debaters, are reported often to roll unctuously heavenwards as these embryonic statesmen declare their "opinions" in powerful periods! (Disraeli's shade snivels in the doorway.)

It is unlikely that a single member of the House will be hewing at the coal-face in three years' time, or occupying positions as bricklayers or blast-furnacemen. But, like Dean Inge, they know all about such employments, and the leisured people thus engaged. They have studied the economics of these trades closely, and perfected their knowledge *en déshabillé*,—in front of the looking-glass. They restore their typescripts to their pockets, vote, and carry the Motion.

O! Wonderful House!

NOTE.—The miners are always appetising prey for all sorts of people. In a recent book,¹ rapturously hailed by the critics, the following profound observations occur: ". . . he knew just a little about working-men and their conditions. He could not see how five shillings a week more would convert the miners to collecting the Suprematist school of painting, or make them abandon their wife-beating and drinking."

There is abundant evidence to prove that, whilst Mr Aldington's characters know nothing about miners, or the working classes generally, they are quite *at home* among the homosexuals, the perverts, and the excrescences of sexual satiety.

It is the business of the genuine artist to *describe the life he knows*, if he would avoid traducing life of which he knows nothing.

¹ *Death of a Hero*, by Richard Aldington, p. 127.

CHAPTER XV

THE UNION SOCIETY

I

IN the Union rooms you sniff up the smell of decay! It is impossible that healthy ideas can germinate in so stale an atmosphere. Thousands of books are stored round the walls. In varicoloured bindings they gleam in their decaying grandeur. Vast numbers of them are untouched by the hand of man, except to be dusted. Their pages exhale an odour of putrefaction. Yellow with age, their interiors are a fecund field for gluttonous maggots. Row upon row are assembled these neglected tomes, looking so impressive in their masses, for bindings are rare and costly. As one looks round, the lament of Robert Burns stirs in the memory :—

“ Free through these leaves ye maggots make your
windings,

But O for the owners' sake, O spare the bindings.”

The gawky idealist from a provincial literary society, where books are things that really matter, and culture is a serious business, would be both exalted and humbled at the sight of so wonderful a collection of volumes. He would gaze upon this

THE UNION SOCIETY

multitude of bound ideas with sparkling eyes, as if the Social Millennium were shaping itself before his very gaze! How *cultured* must all these quiet people be, sitting about in all this stillness!

Oh it is an impressive experience, a first visit to the Union. Before you get used to it! Before its subtle dope deadens the intellect. Only a little time is needed for that! Once the habit is formed of sinking into those deep chairs, the poison spreads.

The provincial book-lover does not know that that vast background of well-bound books is just a cosy setting for comfortable arm-chairs and congealed prejudices.

II

The Oxford Union is unsurpassed for its facilities for a quiet nap. And for the morning and evening newspapers. Or for a whiskey and soda. Although it is possible to get a book on almost any subject, from therapeutics to slugs, it is the rarest sight to see anybody in the Union reading a book. Much time is spent by old clergymen and retired dons at the chess-board, or just softly sleeping in the deep arm-chairs. The silence of the place suggests the interior of some splendid mausoleum. Here the inmates are secure from the stirrings of a vulgar world, and the breath of revolution. Looking round, you are reminded of the drawing by Max, of the inmates of a room "all silent and all damned."

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

Daily the old doyens drift in to the old familiar places. They come to the Union, for there is no place like it. It is sacrosanct: a Holy of Holies. As long as they live—and usually they live to a great age—these superannuated sons of the Old Mother will remain loyal to the Union. They are as true to it as a testy spinster keeping watch over the memory of a first and only love.

Reality never reaches the interior of that arid retreat. Its habitués are all of one type. They believe that God moulded men in three separate classes: the UPPER CLASS, the MIDDLE CLASS, and the working class. There is a fixed look on their faces. None raises his voice above a whisper. One would not be surprised to see the waiters taking orders by signs and symbols. Even in the billiards room the players move like ghosts, looking not a little startled at the sound caused when the balls clash from a forcing shot. The players look round to see if anybody is watching them!

It is certain that the spirits of the long-departed haunt the Union rooms. You can sense the subtle emanations of the defunct. Their occult power pervades the place.

As you meditate quietly in the presence of these other living persons, beetle-browed and soundless as Burmese idols, you may envisage yourself as you will be in a few years' time, if you are a member of the University, and grow to like those deep chairs. You may well utter a prayer: "*Oh God by Thy great Mercies sustain me from becoming thus.*"

THE UNION SOCIETY

There they sit imprisoned behind impenetrable prejudices, their legs crossed; or lying back in a profound sleep. They are as remote from actualities as gargoyles. It is a happy place, the Oxford Union: it is so utterly immobile, so changeless!

A vulgar person once apostrophised the Union Society thus:—

“ Hi there, you fellows with solemn faces and crinkled brows! Do you not know that the almond and the cherry trees are blossoming: that God is laughing in the woods: that the birds are mated and singing joyously? Come out of this House of the Dead; this catacomb of the defunct. . . .

“ *Come, let us rejoice! There are a million men without a job in Britain; and the miners are working for thirty bob a week. Let us go forth together, and sing a song for England. Let us march in chorus to the lilt of ‘ Land of Hope and Glory.’* ”

It was a private apostrophe. What an impressionist picture,—had it been uttered to the wakeful in those deep chairs!

CHAPTER XVI

RUSKIN COLLEGE

I

THE influence of the 'Varsity corrupts whatever is brought within its contact. Thirty years ago a wealthy American founded Ruskin Hall. The donor was an admirer of Ruskin : hence the name of this institution intended to help working men to improve their education, so that they might, on returning to their former employment, devote themselves to the raising of the standard of life among their fellows. For a few years Ruskin Hall faithfully adhered to its original ideals.

Times have changed ! It is no longer Ruskin Hall. It is now RUSKIN COLLEGE ; and let there be no misunderstanding on that point ! A week or two after their arrival the working class students are indistinguishable in appearance from the conventional undergraduate. (The ghost of Ruskin whimpers in the courtyard.)

As soon as a RUSKIN COLLEGE student "feels the atmosphere" he discards his colliery trousers, or, as the case may be, his porter's cap. He is no longer a working man. He is "up at Oxford." As quickly as possible he gets into a pair of flannel trousers ; walks the "Corn" bare-

RUSKIN COLLEGE

headed; and shapes his tongue with all available speed to the twang of the 'Varsity. He receives invitations from rich ladies, and influential hosts, to tea, to talk over "the conditions of the working classes." If he is clever, the dons know how to flatter him. His *ambitions* are greatly encouraged. And he soon learns how to balance the two sides of every question in good Balfourian style!

The RUSKIN COLLEGE student sees the 'eights which "Jimmy" Thomas and Frank Hodges have so successfully scaled. (Do not Lives of Great Men all remind us, we can make *our* lives sublime!) No more colliery trousers; no more porters' caps. It is personal, rather than communal, uplift that a RUSKIN COLLEGE student seeks now.

Oxford is the graveyard of idealists.

NOTE.—The Right Honourable J. H. Thomas, P.C., LL.D., M.P.,—Eighteenth Gentleman in England—etc., is a Welshman whose natural endowments obviated the necessity of his taking a college course.

Mr Frank Hodges, also a Welshman, took a course at Ruskin College. Formerly a working class representative, Mr Hodges now collects Directorships.

Newspaper photographs reveal no differences in either the style or the quality of the dinner ties worn by Messrs Thomas and Hodges, Lords Melchett and Birkenhead.

Mr Lloyd George, also a Welshman, is stated to have a *Personal Fund* variously estimated from £3,000,000 to £5,000,000. It is not, however, believed that the private fortunes of either Mr Thomas or Mr Hodges are, at present, quite so considerable.

CHAPTER XVII

DONS AND DECADENCE

I

THE dons of Oxford are a small colony of men delightfully removed from the world's realities. They breathe that rarefied air which comes of breathing almost wholly their own air: for they seldom risk a gross contact with the lower orders of mankind. Mr Galsworthy has indeed, in *The Dark Flower*, a little portrait of a don stirred to the action of lightly tapping the window-sill of his study with his long, perfect fingers, to express some slight irritation at the sound of his wife's voice. He must have been a Soames, because dons never compromise themselves by a display of feeling.

Except, perhaps, for the League of Nations, that royal sport of academic minds, lusting after obtuse clauses and obsolete forms in the "doing away of all future wars." A spurt of flame may then flash from the corner of a don's eyes, as he inserts a comma or a semicolon in the progress of a long, pellucid paragraph containing the above clear and logical postulate!

At such times as he makes a rare public appearance, to give prestige to an Oxford platform, when a poster announces a meeting about *Vaccination*; *The Swallows' Preservation Society*; or a lecture on *The Problem of the Unfit*, the don's voice

DONS AND DECADENCE

drawls in languorous and lapidary periods, as if he were performing the obsequies at the burial of a favourite dog.

The true-blood Oxford don's voice is like no other sound on earth! It is full of scared and pathetic accents, as if the speaker were alarmed at his own echoes. In these public performances, in joy or sorrow, no emotion flicks the don's face, for he has attained that facial fixity, so accurately described by the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's, as a "countenance carefully denuded of all expression." By this sign, as the Very Rev. Dean declares, "the aristocrats of all nations recognise each other." Not by such a sign would the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's himself be recognised among the aristocrats of all nations!

A mask for a face : that is the ideal.

II

The dons of Oxford despise emotion. Whether you are in the throes of spiritual theory, in which you doubt the existence of the Deity ; or merely in the stress of an inside stricken with the colic ; you must never permit the slightest tremor to impair the perfect rigor of eyebrow and chin, and thereby prejudice in advance opinions upon the state of your mind or your stomach. By such suppressions you will gain that static poise which suggests profundity, but may only be a coma. Such are the external signs of that *rara avis*, the Oxford don.

He *has* been known to smile—in private. A

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

cold, remote, sort of *staccatissimo* smile. A fleeting, precious parting of the lips. That is when he hears mention of the Isles of Greece, or a club cruise to the first Cataract of the Nile.

The dons of Oxford are slaves to tradition, like hags to the gin bottle. They are solemn, pompous, heavy-witted, and without imagination. Their souls are ossified by idolatrous devotion to rule. Even the historic past which they worship so much is all dead garbage, because they do not possess sufficient imaginative genius to translate big episodes into that realm where fancy dwells. They have no alchemy because they have no enthusiasm. Only the possible loss of a Greek verb might excite panic in their souls. One wonders whether or no they really are composed of flesh and blood! Like the Eleusinian Mysteries, the dons of Oxford remain marvellous and rare.

But they take themselves seriously! And the citizens devoutly acknowledge that example. No normal native of Oxford, however rich or powerful he may be, would ever dare hold out against the word of a don. The dons are sacrosanct. They never argue. "For what they know not is *not* Knowledge."

III

To send a boy of original talent to Oxford for three years is a crime against youth. In the very rarest instances only can original talent escape the subtle influence of *type*. And that is precisely

DONS AND DECADENCE

what Oxford means : the perpetuation of a species, a type. Once a youth is infected by the " Oxford manner " he is damned for life !

Original talent is usually effaced in the first four terms. Literary ability seldom succeeds beyond a first subscription to Mr Basil Blackwell's *Oxford Poetry*, that slender annual publication, in which young poets sing of their first sunsets at Cumnor ; epics (revealing much pathetic inexperience !) on the probity of publishers ; and weary rhymes on " love " that would put an Arab to sleep by the Wailing Wall at Jerusalem.

Of course, it is true that both Mr Compton MacKenzie and Mr Beverley Nichols still write since they left Oxford. Mr MacKenzie flourishes a facile pen on the quality of gramophones ; while Mr Nichols has enriched the world by his autobiography, *Twenty-Five*. These are exceptions. Mr MacKenzie and Mr Nichols excepted, what other " Oxford men " are at the head of English Letters to-day ?

No doubt there are others who exert a powerful influence on the swelling stream of immortal English literature. They are dictators whose names the world does not know. Perhaps they are publishers' readers in Paternoster Row, giving their verdicts on 100,000-words manuscripts at 7/6 a time.

(*Inter alia* : In Paternoster Row they publish books with the punctuality of a pork-butcher's machine pressing out sausages : where the great authors—plagiarising the speed of the Master him-

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

self, Mr Edgar Wallace—evolve criminal theories at such an increasing rate that it seems unlikely that Scotland Yard will ever have sufficient staff to arrest all their *practical* admirers, who attempt to do in busy streets what the inspired crime-authors have successfully carried out in quiet studies; and none complains when a decent youth, gaining from these examples what a magistrate called an “ Old Bailey complex ”, is given twelve strokes of the birch, and sent to jail for two months: the youth’s fault apparently being that he was not so clever in practice as his better-inspired teacher was in theory. But Home Secretaries have no time to observe the fruitful outcome of the crime-books: their business is with “ obscene ” works. The “ coincidence ” between a murder in a *thriller* and its practical fulfilment in a street is, however, sometimes noted by the Press.)

In Paternoster Row the enlightened critics draw their pay of a guinea for “ advising ” on three “ novels of average length ”; and here you will find the literary intelligentsia of Oxford, long blue pencil in hand; puncturing the solecistic lapses; spotting the clichés and the split infinitives (*demmed dear old Alma Mater*): guiding the stream of immortal English literature at 7/6 a time. Or they are in the Church, or the Civil Service, loyally obeying orders.

But wherever they are, “ Oxford men ”, you may be sure, are splendidly upholding the superiorities, and “ the fine old tradition of the English gentleman.”

“I have never seen such fine men as our public schools and university youths. . . . They help to carry on the fine old tradition of the English gentleman. . . . A university graduate has had spent upon his education £2,500 to £3,000.”

THE VERY REV. DEAN
OF ST PAUL'S.

PART II

PROOFS OF SUPERIORITY

The Five Exhibits

“ It seemed to me such a piece of good fortune to have been asked down to Oxford at Commemoration. . . . The undergraduates had retired in large numbers, encouraged in this impulse by the Collegiate authorities, who deprecate their presence at Commemoration. . . .”

HENRY JAMES :
English Hours.

PROOFS OF SUPERIORITY

The Five Exhibits

“ I came among the Tartars, and bore arms.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD : *Sohrab and Rostum*.

By a remarkable coincidence two reports appeared side by side in the *Oxford Times* of the 3rd December, 1926, and the juxtaposition seems more in the nature of an Act of God than any sly humour or subtle irony on the part of a sub-editor ! One report is headed “ WILD SCENE ON A TRAIN ”, shewing how undergraduates carried on “ the fine old tradition of the English gentleman ”; and the other report is concerned with “ THE RED MENACE.” A close study of the *Five Exhibits* will undoubtedly convince most readers that Commander Locker-Lampson is justified in believing that the “ ‘ Red ’ menace is second to none in its importance.”

The *Exhibits* extend over a period of a few weeks only, viz., 3rd December, 1926, to 18th March, 1927. Of course the “ young gentlemen ” were away from Oxford for several weeks during this period, for the Christmas holidays. Term ended December 10th, 1926, and the new term commenced January 20th, 1927. But in the short time at their disposal it will be seen how actively undergraduates were engaged in demonstrating

PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

their Superiorities : how splendidly they closed the year 1926 ; but surely not more brilliantly than their triumphs in the first quarter of 1927. It is hoped that the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's is entirely satisfied. Such successes prove the truth of what the " beastly townees " say :—“ *That Oxford isn't the same when the young gentlemen are away.*”

Over a longer period further *Exhibits* could have been shewn in support of the Superiorities ; but these are enough for modest tastes.

EXHIBIT No. I

Oxford Times

3RD DECEMBER, 1926

WILD SCENES ON A TRAIN

UNDERGRADUATES WRECK
CORRIDOR COACHES

A Big Bill to Foot

"A wild scene on a train, better described as an orgy than as a rag, occurred on the L.M. and S. special train which was bringing undergraduates back from the inter-Varsity relay races at Cambridge on Friday night. The orgy not only endangered the lives of any railwaymen who might have been on the permanent way, but ended in two corridor coaches being wrecked to such a degree that they resembled coaches which had been under heavy shell fire. . . . Up roar developed, and grew in intensity when one undergraduate hurled an empty beer-bottle through a plate-glass window of a corridor . . . windows were smashed and glass was sent flying in all directions. . . ."

"The guard appeared on the scene, and though he appealed to the undergraduates . . . they ignored his request and carried on their senseless behaviour, smashing everything breakable in the coaches. Their insatiable appetite for destruction remained unchecked . . . windows, lamp-glasses, glass-covered photographs, luggage racks, upholstery, fittings . . . the door to the guard's compartment was also smashed . . . the coaches were in an indescribable mess, and many of the undergraduates were sleeping in the wreckage they had brought about. . . ."¹

¹ See note on page 114.

THE RED MENACE

COMMANDER LOCKER-LAMPSON'S
PLEA

Firm Action Needed For Self-Protection

"A clear-sighted and striking address on the campaign for clearing out the 'Reds' was given by Commander Locker-Lampson, M.P., at the Carfax Assembly Rooms on Monday evening, when he spoke at a meeting convened under the auspices of the Oxford University Conservative Association. There was a large audience of undergraduates, undergraduettes, and many supporters of Conservatism in the City.

"Commander Locker-Lampson said it seemed to him that the issue of the 'Red' menace was second to none in its importance, and its peril to the British Empire; wherever he went he recognised that the issue was a real issue. On a visit he had recently paid to Hull to speak at a by-election he found that although the election had been going on for a fortnight the Conservative candidate had not been allowed to hold one meeting which had not been disturbed. . . . The disturbances were not chance, but were deliberate. . . . It was not a matter of casual people breaking up a gathering . . . he hated revolution because he loved reform, and he loved reform because he hated revolution, and he would fight his hardest to keep revolution from England (applause) . . . the best way of smashing the Soviet state was to clear out the 'Reds' in England. . . ."

EXHIBIT No. II

Oxford Times

4TH FEBRUARY, 1927

SHOTS FROM COLLEGE WINDOW

UNDERGRADUATES FINED FOR SILLY ACT

Oxford Girl Injured

“ Four undergraduates of Pembroke College were each fined the maximum penalty of £2 at the City Court on Friday for firing a pistol from a room in Pembroke Street. The pellets struck a girl’s legs, causing injury. The defendants . . . each pleaded guilty. . . .

“ The Mayor said it was certainly amusing to have pistols of that sort on Port Meadow, but they ought to know better than to use them in the street. Another thing was that none had expressed regret. He hoped it would be a lesson to them whilst they were in Oxford. Each would be fined £2 or one month’s imprisonment.”¹

¹ “ . . . such fine men . . . ”

EXHIBIT No. III

Oxford Times

25TH FEBRUARY, 1927

“ Following upon the annual dinner of the Bullingdon Club, held at Cowley on Saturday, at which many of the diners not only ‘ looked upon the wine when it was red ’, but consumed it regardless of colour, a large number of undergraduates, not all from Christ Church, journeyed to ‘ the House ’ by means of buses chartered from the Bus Company.

“ They commenced their riotous behaviour by smashing a window of one of the buses, and on entering the precincts of the College they armed themselves with hockey sticks, copper kettles, pieces of coal and other weapons of destruction and bombarded the windows in Peckwater Quad. So intensive was the fusillade that within a quarter of an hour a stranger might have thought that the quad had been heavily shelled. It is said that there were few sound panes of glass left in the famous quad. . . . The electric lamps in the various quads were also smashed, with the result that most of the *rioting* was carried out in complete darkness. Daylight revealed that glass was strewn everywhere, and it took members of the College staff the whole of the following day to remove it.

“ It is understood that it will take a number of men several days to repair the damage done, and that the members of the College will have to ‘ foot the bill ’ To members of the Bullingdon Club this, however, is a trifling matter, and surprise has been expressed that the University authorities are, apparently, not taking more serious steps to discourage this class of childish destructiveness.

“ The Bullingdon Club is the most exclusive Club in University circles, and members of it wear a distinctive evening dress. The Prince of Wales was a member when he was in residence at Oxford, and other distinguished members have been King Edward, Prince Frederick of Denmark, the late Lord Curzon, the Marquis of Salisbury, Lord Desborough, and the Hon. David Bowes-Lyon, brother of the Duchess of York.”¹

¹ “ . . . helping to carry on . . . ”

EXHIBIT No. IV

Oxford Times

11TH MARCH, 1927

UNDERGRADUATE " RAIDERS "

NOCTURNAL EXPLOITS AT WOMEN'S COLLEGE

" Undergraduates are notorious for risky exploits, but few have been more daring than the recent escapades of certain undergraduates who have paid nocturnal visits to one of the women's colleges. For some months this college has been raided from time to time by undergraduates after ' lights out.' At one time the police were notified and a watch was kept in the hope that the intruders might be caught, but they were too artful to attempt wall-climbing feats when the ' limbs of the law ' were at hand.

" Recently one undergraduate—late at night, of course—found his way into the women's college by means of the fire escape, and although chase was given the quarry was lost. But the climax was reached a few nights ago, when a very adventurous undergraduate had an amazing escape. He climbed up the spouting, swung himself up to a kind of verandah, and then pulled himself up to a window. Getting in at the window he fell headlong, and to his amazement found himself in the Bursar's bedroom. There was a chase, fast and furious, but he evaded his pursuers and in true ' cat-burglary ' style he made his escape by the same means used to gain entrance."¹

¹ " . . . the fine old tradition . . . "

EXHIBIT No. V

Oxford Times

18TH MARCH, 1927

UNDERGRADUATE " RAID " AT ST HILDA'S

BARBED WIRE BROUGHT INTO PLAY

" Like many previous escapades, the one at St Hilda's College, where an undergraduate paid a nocturnal visit and used cat-like abilities to climb into an upper window, has had its sequel in the introduction of defensive measures. As was exclusively reported in last week's *Oxford Times*, the undergraduate, after climbing a stack pipe, entered the Bursar's room, and though chase was given he escaped.

" Since the incident the college authorities have taken precautions against any other ' raids ' by fastening barbed wire round the piping and in front of the window. It is expected that if such ' raids ' are repeated, railings similar to these at Somerville College will be placed on the walls."¹

¹ " . . . of the English gentleman . . . "

NOTE: EXHIBIT No. I

“ We are told this orgy has become an annual custom after the relay races. If this is true, then it is time that so senseless a tradition ceased to exist. The Socialists have a strong case against these idle young men, who can find no better use of their leisure than to smash up other people's property—conduct that would get less privileged persons into serious difficulties with the police.¹ . . . The joys of sabotage are not for all.

“ There is an ever-growing danger that universities will soon be considered useless institutions except for the propagation and support of hooligans. It is a pity that the present order of society allows these young men that great latitude which they certainly do not deserve.”—The *Isis*.

The *Oxford Times* stated that the “ bill for repairs would be anything between £200 and £300 ”, but that the “ University authorities when asked whether a statement would be made, in view of the wide publicity which had been given to the affair, reminded our representative that Proctorial action was *traditionally secret*, and declined to discuss the matter.”

¹ Any other members of society except these “ privileged persons ” would undoubtedly have been imprisoned, with hard labour, for such “ sabotage.” And yet there are still in England those simple people who believe that “ the Law is equal before all men.”

PART III

HER FAME REPOSES . . .

HER FAME REPOSES . . .

A HUMBLE duty being fulfilled, the moment is come to ring down the curtain. On such brilliant achievements, herein assembled, the fame of Oxford—*Queen City of Culture, Dream City, City of Dreaming Spires, Light of the World*—reposes; her splendour, like a deathless taper, illumines each succeeding age; and by her works is she justified. Few will deny the proud claim: *There is no place like Oxford.* The Ayes have it.
Verb. Sap.

NOTE

Concerning the references to the late Lord Birkenhead, the author desires to state that *Progress of Protoplasm* was written in the year 1927 and set up in the early part of 1930.

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

Notes for a Panegyric

The question is keenly debated among men of science whether Nature shows signs of purposive adaptation to environment. One might suppose that the evidence was conclusive. . . .

THE VERY REV. DEAN OF ST PAUL'S.

*“ All Things The World Which
Fill
Of But One Stuff Are Spun,
and this Stuff, the basis of
all life, the formative power
. . . to which the name
protoplasm has been given,
is a semi - fluid, sticky
material, full of numberless
minute-granules in ceaseless
and rapid motion.”*

EDWARD CLODD :

Primer of Evolution.

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

*Notes for a Panegyric*¹

*“ Let us now praise famous men. . . .
Men renowned for their power,
Giving counsel by their understanding
And declaring prophecies.”*

I

FROM the simple protoplasm many splendid things have sprung,—such as St Paul’s, where Dean Inge dwells; and where the Dean puts forth those passionate pleas in defence of lowbrowed working men; and devises sermons for superior people, whose bodies do not need to sweat to earn their keep; but all the same needs must get perspiration through their pores, for their health’s sake; and that they achieve in flannel trousers and perfectly laundered sweaters.

II

I am always pleased to speculate upon the splendour of protoplasm. I read bits here and there of what the scientists say concerning our advancement anthropologically: out of primordial darkness, through the pithecus, moving forward, ever forward, emerged a simple, primitive Man; who by granular gradations reached his present stage of civilised splendour: a devotee of Justice,

¹ *In progress of expansion.*

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

Righteousness, and Altruism,—following Christ wholeheartedly.

From some Stuff, a semi-fluid, all this came.

III

But for protoplasm there would have been no Appian Way ; no Elgin Marbles ; no Pyramids in Egypt ; no split infinitives ; no beer for Jack Jones ; and neither Romanes Lecture nor profitable evening journalism for the Very Rev. Dean of St Paul's. Columbus would not have sailed the seas, and the grandeur that is Woolworth's would have gone undiscovered ; Poe would not have written of Helen ; nor Drinkwater, with his flashing fire from heaven, immortalised Lincoln. Shelley would have heard no skylark ; and Gilbert Frankau would have had no " pep " to put into his pollen-burthened sonnets. Augustus John could not have painted that pleasing picture of the Sitwells eating shrimps and winkles, to prove to posterity their profound attachment to the proletariat ; and there would have been no Barony for Mr Sidney Webb at such time as his labours were completed of scheduling the sins of the working classes, exalting statisticians, actuaries and lovers of logarithms, in the Cause of Socialism and that " gradualness " which is " inevitable." It is so well to clearly understand that there would have been none of all such splendid things if God had not invented protoplasm.

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

(No! Not even Deans! . . .

I hate a bully, one who uses weapons whose character is unknown to his victim : one who raises a laugh or invokes a prejudice against those who have no means of administering the *quid pro quo*. One who makes use of his good fortune, the gifts and the conferments of *chance*, to rail against the less-favoured in society ; those who by their sweat, their untutored docility, and good-natured acceptance of the bridle and the harness the gods have given them, strive from the cradle to the grave to gain the pittance that keeps body and soul together.

Now one would think that just as Dean Inge has sprung from protoplasm, the common source and origin of deans, dustmen and dukes—but where a twist in the play of *chance* has given the one a competence and the other a price for hire—he would lend his gifts and power to the improvement of the lot of those less favoured and less comfortable than himself. One would suppose that for the lowly, those who bend their backs for their “betters” to ride them, the Dean would be filled with Christian charity (or what is reputed to be Christian charity) ; and with voice and pen he would deliver himself of kindly proverbs and mellowed counsel fit for the wounds of a million tragedies.

Not he! Behold this Christian priest in the ring, in his gaudy war-paint, greedy for the easy triumphs that fall to his venomous pen ; easy triumphs over a million men who cannot speak the language of the learned Dean, whose caricatures and calumnies must remain unanswered, for his

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

victims are without the means of answering him in his own coin.

The Christian Church is so perfectly represented by the Dean of St Paul's; and it is small wonder that men in their masses are drawn to its solace and its comforts; that the churches are so crowded Sunday by Sunday that the unemployed are to be put to building more and more, and still more, churches to accommodate the overwhelming needs of those who are converted to the Christian Church which is so perfectly represented by the Dean of St Paul's.

Yes, I hate a bully, particularly a priestly bully, who from his privileged pedestal pours down the vials of his scorn (at highest rates) on such un-superior people as do the world's work, and make good "copy" for a parson's pay to supplement his income as the Dean of St Paul's.

Let the Dean descend on his knees, devoutly to thank God for the luck in Life's Lottery whereby he is allotted so secure and comfortable a place in the crooked scheme of things, enjoying his dinner and his whisky, his panegyrics from the pulpit for all those superior people like himself, whose bodies do not need to sweat to earn their keep.

On your knees, O Dean! A slight slip in the play of chance and you might have been a dustman, or a miner daily going down three thousand feet to the earth's bowels in a pit in Durham!)

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

IV

My imagination reels at these and other unrepresented protoplasmic splendours. But I will say, without reserve, that there is one, unnamed as yet, whose prowess in the Field of Progress "puts in the shade" all others I have noticed! I have read of him, and dreamed of him, and I have named him in my prayers! And now I put him in my prose,—the highest compliment of all! I mean Lord Birkenhead—the Earl of Birkenhead,—a contemporary of mine. And when I think upon the Godhead; and of all the progress proceeding from a piece of simple protoplasm, released in those infantile days of Man's first rise, I am still amazed at the splendour of my contemporary,—the Earl of Birkenhead.

V

From Wadham to the Woolsack; and yet so modest with it all! So attentive to the claims of pitmen when they seek a slightly higher wage; though the Earl himself despises money so: believing, like John Burns, that £500 is enough for any man's wants. Except miners, who, the Earl thinks, move amid so many daily dangers, not to mention nightly ones, the £1,000 a year is little enough for men so employed.

With what sagacious perspicacity My Lord

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

probed each controversial point during the progress of the Miners' Lock-out, incorrectly called a Strike,—but not by the Earl of Birkenhead. How valiantly, against such vigorous odds, the Noble Earl strove to redress the balance in the coal field; for he is so tender with poor pitmen. And then he went away, after his unceasing struggles to make miners better paid, to seek health in the sunshine at Monte Carlo. His haggard looks, on the day he shipped to Monte Carlo: his photograph was in the papers. His body broken with the burdens he had lately borne to redress the balance in the coal field. He went away to seek new health, in flannel trousers and a perfectly laundered sweater, in the sunshine at Monte Carlo. (The miners stayed at home, their wives and children all together, in their Model Dwellings in Durham; and in other places just as good; they stayed at home to cheer Lord Birkenhead on his way to Monte Carlo.)

VI

I dreamed that I was dead; and, in the luck of things, had gone to Heaven. Through infinite space I saw a golden ladder, leading from the earth to the utmost pinnacle by the Great White Throne. And, gazing earthwards, I saw Lord Birkenhead coming up. He was attired resplendently (the facts go all awry in dreams!), and climbed each golden rung confidently. He was pressing urgently upwards, passing every other one in the haste of his

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

advancement. A myriad others were advancing ; but none came on with that triumphal progress characterising the ascent of the Earl of Birkenhead. Said one old whiskered fellow : “ Not since Cæsar’s day have the cymbals struck so choice a chord.” And on he came, the Earl of Birkenhead, straight up the golden ladder, from the sunshine at Las Palmas, to take his proper place at the Great White Throne, just by the Godhead. (And over his shoulder was hung the horn of the goat that suckled Jupiter.)

VII

And then my gaze was alienated from the Earl of Birkenhead (though, happily, not for long) ; and I saw assembled there (but *not* by the Great White Throne !) the literary intelligentsia of England ; and, whether they were in Heaven or Hell, I cannot say,—such is the awryness of the dreaming state.

Arnold Bennett was there, arguing with a publisher ; adding up the accounts, disputing royalties, and most minutely ticking off the rate per thou. He got his way, of course ; and then he prepared a list of pictorial phrases that would “ motivate ” his next novel. He would be exact thereon,—using neither more nor less than the agreed rate per thou. All-important that, the rate per thou.

Belloc was learnedly and rapidly relating to

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

Mephistopheles certain miscellaneous matters which historians had missed in a palimpsest concerned with a Papal Edict issued ten minutes previous to the ruin of Pompeii and certain points upon porcelain which preceded the period of the Black Virgin of La Délivrande and (in a parenthesis) he drew an analogy between a lane in Picardy and the Golden Gate to Heaven and all this time he spoke in the Latin tongue (with a slight Sussex accent),—but the Devil only yawned!

(Mr Garvin was *bemused* at this, as he stood observingly by, with a sackful of asterisks to scatter at his Sunday readers, to alleviate the mental perils of a too-close application to the universal principles he propounds each week for nations and for men.)

(Gerald Gould searched—as usual—for clichés, in the dozen novels he weekly reads, to scintillate in his Sunday summary: he so seldom finds “the norm.”)

D. H. Lawrence gloated on a ganglion, comforted with the thought that, at last, he had trapped *The Absolute*. Galsworthy had a megrim, because Soames had nostalgia: Old Soames, whose precious seed produced the *Pedigree* and all those pearl waistcoat buttons.

And then I saw the choicest crowd, none other than the *London Mercury* contributors; and they stood close together, sublimated in an excess of their own fecund ecstasy. Their figures were illumined in a halo of their own begetting: but J. C. Squire shone more lustroously than any of the others; although Edward Shanks scintillated

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

almost as much. They were gathered to debate the newest talent; and to *establish* ("beyond a peradventure") their special selections. (You must know the name of J. C. Squire? His voice is heard sometimes over the wireless, reciting in an anguished tone the gloomier pieces from a Thomas Hardy anthology.) As for the *London Mercury*! Its contributors breathe an air so rarefied that the very colons and punctuation marks which puncture its priceless pages pulsate with a spiritual power not to be felt elsewhere. To be forbidden its pages is to be banned from immortality; or any common or garden life at all in the realm of the arts. Those whose names are absent from its lists, either in its columns, *primum mobile*, or in its book reviews, *pis aller*, are *ipso facto* relegated to the ranks of the *profanum vulgus*. . . .

Walpole was stirring up a lot of inspiration: he would shortly wash a waiting crowd in a bath of his well-known soul-salve; and febrile Aldous Huxley was hurriedly fertilising an old epigram or two, so much the same in movement as Alfred de Musset, or D. H. Lawrence,—who appeared again, to watch the sun illumining the thighs and udder of his black cow, Susan; with her head to the earth, set in spatial isolation, filled with the urge for phallic consummation; but meanwhile eating grass. (The ganglion had given the form, but not the Essence, of The Absolute.) George Moore was pruning for posterity two sentences in *Esther Waters* he had already pruned twice in the First and Second editions (Limited Editions): he

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

had not milked her well enough before. (In one sentence he substituted a colon by a semicolon; and in the penultimate clause he altered savour to *savor* (full). James Joyce was lovingly overlooking a lupus and a lesion : he was about to begin two new books. David Garnett wished he knew where *Æsop's* belly lay : it might exude a stronger smell than any fox's odour. It was wonderful what one could do with a smell, when a lady was *Lady into Fox*. Such gallantries succeeded; the nasal propensities of the Hawthornden prize-givers being peculiarly acute.

VIII

The scene was slightly metamorphosed : moving powerfully among the multitude, and groups standing by, were the literary arbiters and the Book Society of England. (Little Alexander Pope pleaded for a ten years' holiday out of Heaven, to set up shop again at Twickenham : below, he saw so many protuberances that he fairly itched to puncture them.)

There was Gerald praising Hugh ; and Hugh was praising Gerald. J.B. was praising Robert ; and Robert was praising J.B. Ralph had a good word for S.P.B., and S.P.B. had a good word for Ralph. Humbert was praising E.T., and E.T. went on praising Humbert. And they all praised each other ; and reciprocated in the matter of Dedications ; and all were supremely happy in their

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

modesty, *all-close-together*,—the literary arbiters of England. (And that is how such things are done.)

And the Sitwells were there, far back, averting the limelight, on their triple-pieced settee, glowing in their Gothic beauty, on their settee,—a particularly pretty piece of furniture this, exhaling an antique odour, curved and comfortable and rarely upholstered; so soothing in the recumbent posture—albeit provocative of great crimson adverbs and big bloody adjectives, evocated in the several causes of emancipating midden cleaners, workers on irrigation farms, blast-furnacemen, wet-footed policemen on point duty, and all those who gird their loins and strive and sweat at democratic duties. (It is on that triple-pieced settee where the Sitwells sweat in evocating all that searing Sitwellian *social* satire and inveigh with iconoclastic invective against the ills of Inequality; and compile together for posterity their own epitaph, beginning —“ These Sad Ruins.”)

Masefield held in his hand a ticket of admission to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party, while he read again the prologue to *Salt Water Ballads*; brooded on metamorphosis; and the vogue of the popular novel: a sudden celestial flash illuminated Bernard Shaw in silhouette, surveying himself in a stained glass window. Galsworthy was giving his manuscripts of *Strife* and *Island Pharisees* to be sold to supplement funds to support the *status quo*. The rebels were dead! (The Right Hon. James Henry Thomas, P.C., LL.D., M.P.,

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

passed by : he had twelve new dress shirts under his arm : a new Labour Government was 'ere.)

Figures came and went in that monstrous mental mêlée,—during which time the Earl of Birkenhead had scaled the golden ladder, and was already taking up an authoritative position on the Right Hand of God.

IX

And I remember feeling all things would be O.K., with the Earl of Birkenhead sitting on the Right Hand of God ; with wee, timorous, cowering Barrie (that *shrinking* man from Thrums) close by.

A glittering galaxy surrounded the Earl of Birkenhead, whose dazzling shape shone under the myriad-lighted candelabra ; a halo about his head (the horn of the goat which suckled Jupiter still slung over his shoulder) ; and at his feet the Big Bag containing the prizes he had won for Freedom's sake. (The miners had a motto there, which read : “ For Services Rendered : Welcome to the Earl of Birkenhead.”)

I heard someone say : “ England's representative man.” And I felt proud of being an Englishman ; and how, from protoplasm, from some Stuff, a semi-fluid, such splendid things had sprung. I wondered what Divinity or Maggot it is that gives a turn this way or that to protoplasm, and, heigho, you have a Duke or a drudge ; a window-cleaner or an Earl ; a Palace or a slum ; a jail or a Convent.

THE PROGRESS OF PROTOPLASM

X

Just a twist of fate and your destiny will be,— a figure at the Eton and Harrow match, or a midden-cleaner in Easingden; a raconteur in the Savage Club, or a bootblack in the Strand; a winner at baccarat, or a loser at pitch-and-toss; an enthusiast for Mendelssohn's Concerto in E minor, or "Men of Harlech" on a mouth organ; a climber in the social scale, or a steeplejack on a chimney; a dowager on a settee, or a slavey in the scullery; a peer in the Lords, or a prisoner in the dock; a judge in an ermined robe, or an attendant in a urinal.

All such proceedings (I thought) are sprung from that semi-fluid; that spurt of simple protoplasm. Yet hardly had this thought possessed me, when my dream was violently disrupted by the sounds that reached me, through my bedroom window, of a miner from the Rhondda Valley, playing "Land of my Fathers" on a ukulele, in the street below.

XI

Yet in my waking hours, I am still pleased to meditate on the measureless progress and the splendour that have proceeded from the spilth of protoplasm.

**BOOKS BY
J. G. Sinclair**

Press Opinions

1931

“The opinions of those who judge our work impartially, where the motive of self-interest is entirely absent, are not only to be regarded, but greatly valued.”

HAZLITT.

TRUSTED LEADERS

By J. G. SINCLAIR

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SATIRES

Includes : Oswald Mosley, J. H. Thomas, Philip Snowden, Jack Jones, Sidney Webb, Dean Inge, G. K. Chesterton, etc., etc.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

of

Trusted Leaders

By J. G. SINCLAIR

MICHAEL TEMPLE in the *Referee*.—"Have we thrown up a genuine satirist at last? When I read Mr Sinclair's *vers libre* I am tempted to think so, for under all its apparent geniality and humour it is easy to detect something of the *saeva indignatio* of Juvenal and something of Swift's uncanny knack of probing the tenderest spots. He can be deliciously funny . . . but whenever he comes up against real wrong and hypocrisy there is a sting in his words which is bred of real emotion. It is the business of the satirist to wield the scourge, and the more vigorously he wields it the better for the world. But he must not apply it to the wrong people or to the right ones for the wrong reason. That is where most of our modern satirists have gone so far wrong, but that is just what you never feel in reading Mr Sinclair."

G.K.'s Weekly.—"This is good stuff . . . in trenchant prose masquerading as *vers libre*, the author crashes his broadsides through the 'guff' that is talked by Capitalist and Socialist alike. Mosley, Webb, Inge, Thomas come in for some nasty knocks."

Clarion.—"I have read the book through from cover to cover and have thoroughly enjoyed it."

EASINGDEN

By J. G. SINCLAIR

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

of

Easingden

By J. G. SINCLAIR

Review of Reviews : "Mr Sinclair is an acute observer . . . he has a keen eye for illustrative incident or essential characteristic. These result in a work which is arresting . . . its obvious truth. The book is outstanding."

Daily Herald : "As a piece of literature this book rings the bell. No one who reads it . . . is ever likely to forget it."

Daily Chronicle : "Naked truth never guessed at by suburbia . . . Uses an even more spiky bludgeon than Upton Sinclair . . . is in the true classic vein."

Yorkshire Observer : "Brilliantly done. For a piece of graphic, ironic reality there has been nothing to equal it in the last few years . . . A powerful piece of writing."

Edinburgh Evening News : "This is a pungent study. . . . The author writes strongly, too forcibly many may think ; but the descriptions of life are so realistic that the reader is absorbed."

Saturday Review : "There is no doubt that Mr Sinclair has written a remarkable and disturbing book . . . the whole book is so patently sincere and felt . . . fearless, incisive . . . we can assert that it is artistically true . . . a passionately presented image . . . fine prose."

- Clarion* : "Read the book. Once began, it cannot be left. Read the book. It is a remarkable piece of work."
- Bristol Times* : "This is a remarkable book."
- Nottingham Journal* : "'Easingden' is almost horribly frank . . . stark horror and pathos . . . will make a profound impression on the student of human nature. It is so careful of the truth."
- Birmingham Post* : "Altogether, a book to read for its sincerity and absence of the sentimental; for its nervous and polished English."
- Liverpool Courier* : "'Easingden' is vivid . . . realistic."
- The New Leader* : "It is long since we have read anything so vivid in colour and firm in drawing . . . living, convincing, true . . . a powerful piece of writing. One could write much of this book."
- Sheffield Mail* : "Vivid pen pictures . . . bears the mark of photographic truth."
- Birmingham Mail* : "It is a book that will certainly command attention. It is a powerful and moving study and obviously sincere."
- Liverpool Post* : "It is a pleasure to read Mr Sinclair's book . . . marked by sincerity and an admirable sense of humour."
- Manchester Guardian* : "Mr Sinclair refuses to be either sentimental or insincere. It is a book to read."
- Welsh Outlook* : "It is by no means a pretty book; rather, it is something more important, a true book. It is a book to be recommended freely."
- Forward* : "I cannot summarise it ('Easingden'); but I can, and do, advise you to read it . . . Since Zola's 'Germinal' there has been nothing quite so realistic; nor so imaginative . . ."
- The Isis* : "I started to read it, and, having started, continued to the end . . . it is strong, alive . . . it is impressionism used well and used truly. I hope that this second edition will be followed by another and another."
- The Scotsman* : "Cool in its ironical hits, and warm in its steady indignation."
- East Anglian Daily Times* : "The author of this outspoken work anticipates that a section of people will detest the book and its writer. That expectation will probably be fulfilled. Others will recognize and appreciate the courage displayed by Mr Sinclair. Fearless and full-bodied descriptions."
- Western Morning News* : "It is fortunate when someone paints an un-biased picture."

Love in Easingden

By J. G. SINCLAIR

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

of

Love in Easingden

By J. G. SINCLAIR

Daily Telegraph.—"Mr Sinclair has done well to return to Easingden . . . These vivid pen pictures, touched with irony, sympathy, scorn, as the case may be, bear the mark of truth. It is not given to many novelists to create their own little world, but Mr Sinclair has made one in Easingden."

Manchester Evening News.—" 'Easingden' was regarded by the most competent critics as being brilliant in its execution. The new book ('Love in Easingden') is as marked in its power and sincerity, as fearless and as graceful, and charming in its writing. Certainly Mr Sinclair has a fine pen."

Observer.—"Mr J. G. Sinclair is a writer of great natural ability. . . . 'Love in Easingden' describes the married life of Amy Treegar, a pretty woman and submissive wife, with Ralph Purvis . . . beautifully yet sternly rendered—without compromise, sentimentality or exaggeration . . . it has greatness, and makes one hold one's breath."

Dundee Courier.—"A great realist . . . This transcript accumulates a great body of experience that has the vitality of reminiscence . . . pleasures and pains such as fiction rarely possesses. Mr Sinclair has something of Arnold Bennett's potent art. His style is intimate, and translates essential and beautiful things that very few writers ever make known."

Morning Post.—" 'Easingden' is already known to Mr Sinclair's many readers, and here he casts a warm and penetrating light upon fresh corners of its life. Mr Sinclair's is a book straight from the heart and the shoulder, which one reads with respect for its sincerity, and with pleasure for its style . . . A masterpiece is the account of the great match."

Birmingham Mail.—" Brilliant . . . graphic portraiture . . . bearing the stamp of sincerity. Mr Sinclair's portrait gallery contains many masterly delineations . . . beautiful and moving . . . vividly illumined by frequent flashes of humour that is in turn ironical and satirical but never too bitter . . . Dickensian."

Daily Mail.—" Very successful. Easingden and its inhabitants do live; we can enter into the daily routine of their existence and catch the very accents of their commentary upon the world."

Daily Herald.—" Mr Sinclair has given us a vivid and faithful picture. The hopes and despairs, the joys and sorrows of these men and women are dealt with realistically."

Daily News.—" At his best, he writes superbly . . . clear and memorable touches . . . it is a tribute to Mr Sinclair's genius that one reads the account of *The Match* with one's heart in one's mouth."

Birkenhead News.—" He has a pleasant easy style, he possesses imagination, sympathy and vigour, and he is not content to follow the beaten track."

New Statesman.—" The book makes an opportune appearance."

Liverpool Post.—" Mr Sinclair has an unusual gift of introducing his characters so that we know more of them after a few meetings than we do of our lifelong neighbours."

Daily Sketch.—" The story of a wife and mother done with sympathy and keen observation."

Manchester Guardian.—" A book of actual men and women who live their own lives without asking outsiders like us for a pattern . . . you will read on to the last page of this vigorous human document."

Bookfinder Illustrated.—" Graphically described, the characters carefully delineated. This is a strong, sincere story leavened with humour."

Aberdeen Press.—" Clever character-drawing and keen insight."

T.P.'s Weekly.—" Vigorous strokes, always touched with humour. . . . The marriage story of Amy Purvis and her husband is told with a grim sincerity."

Liverpool Echo.—" Entertaining . . . a delightful portrayal of the life and love of Amy Treegar and Ralph Purvis. There is a stark sincerity about Mr Sinclair's work."

Publishers' Circular.—" Mr Sinclair paints a vivid picture. . . . His work deserves to be widely read."

The Return of the Rebel

By J. G. SINCLAIR

A ROMANCE AND A RECORD

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

of

The Return of the Rebel

By J. G. SINCLAIR

Daily Mirror : "Tells of a man's defeats, triumphs and loves ; and of his final happiness."

Liverpool Courier : "It is, perhaps, just a trifle too frank, but its obvious sincerity redeems it. A startling indictment, and is equally daring in its assertions."

Glasgow Evening News : "'The Return of the Rebel' has a powerful love story, and, despite the frank and some unpleasant revelations about Stephen Embleton's character, the reader's sympathy and even affection is won for him."

Morning Post : "It is a powerful book ; profoundly sincere."

Manchester Guardian : "It is a proof of the author's skill in giving his story life that no doubt ever assails one while one is reading it . . . the matter is so intensely absorbing."

Dundee Courier : "Not since George Gissing's 'Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft' has any intimate record contained, with art of words, so much intellectual pabulum as 'The Return of the Rebel.' With his 'Easingden' novels Mr Sinclair secured distinction ; but these were not so fine as this commentary. It is life and it is literature."

- Tatler* : "Conscience ! Oh curse it ! Mr J. G. Sinclair's excellent story, 'The Return of the Rebel,' is very readable, simply because it is told sincerely and with honest feeling."
- Referee* : "A lot of passionate indignation went to the making of 'The Return of the Rebel' . . . the personality of Embleton completely convinced me of Mr Sinclair's understanding of his human material."
- Liverpool Echo* : "As usual, sincerity informs the book. 'The Return of the Rebel' compels attention, as does all Mr Sinclair's work."
- Daily Telegraph* : "The book is written with vigour, sincerity and directness."
- Birkenhead News* : "Mr Sinclair has written a most powerful, clearly-thought-out and engrossing novel : his style is perfect, for he possesses the sure touch of the craftsman . . . the vital clearness of expression that one demands of H. G. Wells . . . Life, just that ! Life with its doubts and fears, hopes, pleasures and sorrows, set down with the grimness of Maupassant, dipped in the truthfulness of Balzac, and bent upon righting the wrongs with the sincere clarity of Dickens."
- Sheffield Telegraph* : "The book is impressively sincere, and throughout is of a high order."
- Manchester Evening News* : "'The Return of the Rebel' is a cleverly written book, intimate—possibly too intimate for some readers—and remarkable for its insight and characterisation."
- Oxford Times* : "Sincerity is the keynote of Mr Sinclair's latest book, 'The Return of the Rebel,' but it is by no means its only good quality. There is cleverness, there is insight into character, and there is conviction which is hardly ever marred by exaggeration."
- Western Mail* : "Readers of 'Easingden' will need no assurance concerning the literary qualities of 'The Return of the Rebel.' Mr Sinclair seems quite incapable of turning a poor sentence. He is almost as meticulous in his style as R. L. Stevenson . . . such is the art of Mr Sinclair, he rivets our attention from first page to last."
- Bookfinder Illustrated* : "He is as remorseless as Upton Sinclair in presenting truth. His ironical humour is akin to Dickens, and his power of touching our most tender spots smacks of Swift."

