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SOME OXFORD NOTES.

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On arriving at Oxford the churches and colleges impress one first of all. Everywhere comes before the eye that soft grayish stone, which has lent itself so kindly to the action of chisel and saw, and has been fashioned into structures at once lovely and venerable. The moistness of climate, which makes the trees green in branch, as well as in leaf, soon tones down recent additions into a mellow harmony, and does not require many years to round the angles into melting outlines of beauty.

At first one wishes to have some of the smoky antiquity washed away, but one repents of that wish afterwards. English conservatism, loving change only when it comes as a gradual broadening of precedent, derives much of its strength from those historical buildings; for those dead and sceptred sovereigns, our ancestors, rule our spirits, not from their urns only, but from their former abodes.

In spite of the great concourse of students at Toronto during the term, they can never be called, except at Hallowe'en, the dominating feature of the city. When term is over, and they go down, the stream of life flows full as ever, except in the immediate vicinity of the colleges, but it is not so in Oxford. Then, there is a marked change in the appearance of the streets, which lose their characteristic notes of student face and dress, and seem, by comparison, half-deserted. During The Long the shop-windows sink their splendors, and neglect their alluring brightness till term begins again, though they do try to allure the townsman by cheap sales of old stock. Oxford, in the sleepy quiet of The Long, is a wonderful contrast to Oxford with its streets thronged with Dons, Scholars and Commoners, in all their various distinctive gowns.

In Oxford there are many encouragements to the hard student. A man with a First has a distinction which may endure even to his epitaph, securing him attention, both honorary and practical, all the way. Even a good second or third is not to be despised, and if a man adds athletic fame, his chances of a position in a Public School become almost a certainty.

But Minerva not only dismisses with honors, she welcomes with rewards, for the numerous scholarships, open and close, with which all the colleges are provided, in many a case have given a clever youth just that assistance which turned his choice of life-work from business to pedagogy, or one of the learned professions.

Once in Oxford, and given a good start, a man is charioted to glory, not by a tandem or a coach and four (these belong to the vain young Bloods), but by a coach and tutor. By the tutor his studies are directed and supervised. To him he brings essays on the

subjects he is reading, from him he receives advice as to their matter and style, and also as to works of reference. If there is any subject in which he finds himself weak, or any special branch in which he would excel, he may employ a coach, who will take him through the more elementary or advanced parts after the manner of an expert. He will always find any Don, whose lectures he attends, ready to elucidate a point or give further references. It is very noticeable, too, with how keen an eye his fellow-students gauge him, so that his final standing becomes as much a foregone conclusion as the lottery of examinations will permit. He may choose, from various more or less worthy motives, to content himself with simply getting through his exams, and take up his time with the engrossing variety of sports, clubs, and social occupations with which Varsity life is so full, or he may combine the two, and reserve some of the harder part of his reading for vacation, perhaps joining a reading party.

Here one might ask a question about the effect of Oxford life as a preparation for the great world. In answer to this, one may say, first of all, that the name of having had an Oxford career gives a stamp to a man which is of use in enabling him to pass current. It is commonly taken as guarantee for a certain amount of education, breeding, and culture.

The cautiousness of the English people makes them eager to demand and ready to credit tokens of this sort. But allowing for that, and pre-supposing that in the case of the individual, there is both the stamp and the gold, let us go further, and ask in what degree Oxford prepares men for active life in the world. Now two Oxford characteristics need to be overcome for facility there. We all recognize the tendency of study to cause abstraction, and the tendency of exclusiveness to cut away that sympathetic approachableness and that breadth of view which do so much in making a capable man of affairs. Oxford has a strong tendency to make a man both abstract and exclusive, shut up within the narrow walls of rather selfish interests. Not that it does so inevitably, but the tendency is there; perhaps one might say there is always a danger of this when a young man's life has been spent almost exclusively in becoming educated. The keen Chesterfield makes the same complaint about Cambridge in his time. "I remember that when I came from Cambridge, I had acquired, among the pedants of that illiberal seminary, a sauciness of literature, a turn to satire, and contempt, and a strong tendency to argument and contradiction. But I had been but a very little while in the world before I found that this would by no means do." As a result of his penetration, Chesterfield took speedy means to shake off those defects.

In regard to the defect of too great abstraction, which seems more likely to come from a University training in England, than in Canada, the sagacious Sir Arthur Helps noted the tendency, and even prescribed