

scholars, and the society of thoughtful men, and the passion and music of great poets, and the charm of that atmosphere which seems blown from the cool, quiet twilight of antiquity—as beautiful and as simple as all such things can make it? Why is it, indeed? That is a riddle, the gods be thanked, you must read for yourself. Even though you have your bachelor's hood, if you have not answered that question, it would be well for you to matriculate once more. Yet when you solve the problem your solution will depend, not only upon your own character, but also upon your own college. Indeed, there are even universities, or institutions called universities, where any such alienation from those every day interests, which we may term political and professional and commercial, does not exist. But if I were asked to name the university where this detachment does exist, and exists to the greatest extent, I think I should answer, the University of Oxford. But I shall not attempt to argue that Oxford is the greatest university in the world, simply because with that institution this alienation from the immediate demands of life exists in a superlative degree. That is neither my duty nor my purpose. It will not be your degree, it will not be altogether that dose of Ideality you will carry away with it, to last you a life time, that will constitute your university training. And I implore you to remember that prayer, we have all heard so often in this, our own university, wherein we of old once asked that while following the accidental and the temporal, "we may ever be mindful of the more important interests of eternity." And did not someone once warn us to take care of the beautiful, since the useful had the habit of taking care of itself?

"Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
Heedless of gain,  
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure  
Bad is our bargain!"

Now this peculiar isolation from the world, I believe, will be the first thing to impress the alien who wanders into Oxford. The out-of-the-way position of the town itself, nestling secluded in the little valley of the upper Thames (with even the railways permitted only to touch timidly at its skirts), the sober quietness of the college cloisters and chapels, the quaint, unchanging, old-fashioned gables along the High, the very nature of the studies pursued by the students, the absolute exclusion of women from the colleges, and of manufacturers from the town, the austere peacefulness, the tranquillity, the sobriety of the place—all will combine to give the stranger an impression of Oxford's almost mediæval monasticism. Yet he will not associate this strange monasticism with its counterpart, mediæval asceticism. The Oxford undergraduate is no ascetic. In fact, the alien will be surprised by the atmosphere of luxuriousness, of epicureanism, of physical well-being and substantial comfort existing in the university, for all its outward austerity and sobriety. Many a dark, dismal academic passage-way, "third turnin' to the right, sir, second floor hup, sir!" opens mysteriously into an unexpected little suite of college rooms, luxuriously cheerful and home-like, with its open fire and easy chairs, and old china, and curtains, and pictures.

So perhaps it would be well for us to glance first at this mere external phase of Oxford life, since it is this, the social and athletic element, which will first impress the stranger. Every day of term from one o'clock until the early winter dusk, or the late lingering summer twilight, he will see college men doing nothing but pleasure seeking. It is bad form, atrociously bad form, to work in the afternoon. And after all Oxford is such a beautiful, big playground! Yet it will be observed that the Oxford man seeks his pleasure in a very grave and a very business-like manner. On the river, for example, it is amazing to behold the quiet dignity with which the rowing-man submits to the

sarcasm and the bullying of the coach on the tow-path. Or if the stranger visits the Holywell Tennis Courts, and gazes at that great flannel-trousered battalion of busy players, he will be struck by the serene quietness of it all. The only sounds he will hear will be the low, steady patter of the tennis balls and an occasional subdued "thirty-all," or "lone fifteen." Or if he goes to the parks, and looks on at one of the great football matches, between Cambridge and Oxford for instance, he will hear no "rooting," there will be no tin horns, no college cries, no undergraduate delirium. Now and then, after a particularly good play, he will hear a little patter of gloved hands, and perhaps some forgetful little urchin shamefacedly give vent to a shriek of uncontrollable admiration—but that will be all. And at those long, long summer afternoon cricket matches he will see the same thing repeated; the same melancholy stillness and the same sad austerity. They may enjoy it, I presume they enjoy it, or they would not do it. But to the alien, if he happens to have seen but once the fluttering sea of Blue and heard the thunder of voices when Yale or Toronto have scored, it will seem lacking in animation and life.

Twice during the year, and twice only, is this Oxonian austerity and reserve of manner forgotten. This long-looked-for lapse back into the English school-boy relieves the tension for the still youthful undergraduate during those merry, memorable carnival weeks when the races are taking place on the river, at the time of the Torpids in Spring and the Eights in Summer. But then it is not only the undergraduate, it is all Oxford that is suddenly touched into some strange, undignified ecstasy. The stranger will be astonished to see grave and portly old bishops, and thin-legged tutors, and once dignified old dons, perhaps with a touch of the gout, running red-faced and reckless of mien, after their different crews, screaming, advising, expostulating and cheering their favorites on to victory, or firing off their antiquated looking old horse pistols when there is danger of a bump being made. This scene will help to explain something which the alien will learn when he becomes better acquainted with the university, making it easier for him to understand why the different colleges are each so anxious to secure unto themselves, not alone the man with the big brain, but equally as much the man with the big leg and the broad back. The father of a promising cricketer or oarsman, you may be sure, need never bother about coming and putting his son's name down at a college before securing his admission. He simply takes his choice.

This predominating repression of feeling, however, is not peculiar to Oxford. It is the Anglican manner of observing the amenities of life. It is the habitual attitude of the English gentleman, and it is really the English gentleman (but not, thank heaven and Jowett, as we see him in the pages of *The Duchess*) who dominates Oxford. Even though there is an occasional effervescence of juvenility, and now and then a prank or a practical joke bordering on brutality, where could you gather together four thousand young men and have none of them violate the canons of "The Complete Bachelor?" When an undergraduate from the top gallery of the Sheldonian Theatre not long since asked of a certain Indian prince (on whom the university was conferring an honorary degree) if he really *had* used Pear's Soap, the entire gallery of rag-makers had the manliness to answer with an immediate and spontaneous chorus of reproving "Oh's!"\* And that reproving "Oh!"

\* When the late Poet Laureate of England went forward to receive his degree in the crowded Sheldonian, during a momentary silence, when all the great men of Oxford and England were holding their breaths, a grave, sorrowful voice asked with intense seriousness: "Alfred, did you mother wake and call you early, call you early Alfred dear?" And it is said, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, did not even smile.