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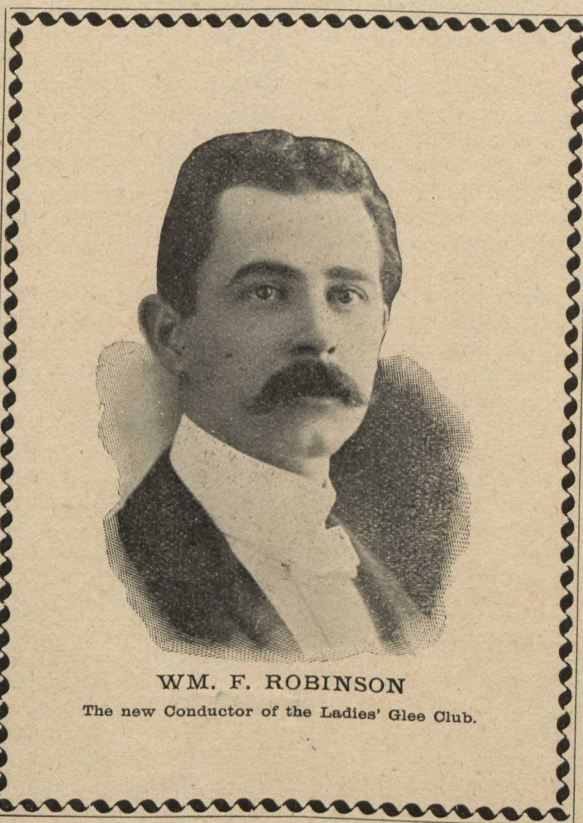
Undergraduate Life at Oxford.

In all Oxford ragging there is a marked element of method and premeditation. Such elaborate planning and concocting and brooding over it, certainly robs their college joking of the one alleviating element in such things: exuberance of animal spirits. It gives to their occasional pranks a coloring of pure, cold, barbaric cruelty. I can illustrate this only by example: The laws of social precedence are most rigidly observed in Oxford for all its repeated and passionate avowels of liberalism and democracy. I do not mean that freshmen, for instance (they do not even use the odious word), are treated with that childish and inconsiderate rudeness to be seen at certain other universities. Young men coming up to Oxford from Eton or Harrow or Rugby are not apt to be either insolent or unsophisticated. But if he is senior or freshman, and a "bounder" he will be the butt of many a delicately educative practical joke. And here is the first example that comes to my mind at the moment. Three years ago an undergraduate came up to Magdalen College, a young Scotchman, clever, self-assertive and ambitious. His uncle or his grandfather, I believe, was a Scottish nobleman, and he soon caused the fact to be known. This undergraduate was approached by certain senior men who kindly offered to explain to him, since he was such a stranger to the traditions of the place, a few of the delicate little items of college etiquette. Among other points to which they gravely drew his attention, was the necessity of calling and leaving his card with every senior man and fellow and scholar and tutor in the college (a thing, of course, which no new-comer dare do) unless he wanted to be thought a beastly prig. He had not enough cards so he had three hundred new ones hurriedly printed. They raided his rooms the next night, the entire college, and put him in the Cherwell for it! But, after all, did the joke not have Anglo-Teutonic bluntness about it? And then, in my own time, there was the case of Scholarship Smith. Scholarship Smith, when he first came up to Oxford from

his two private tutors and the rural parsonage, won his name and his eminence by being approached by three undergraduates, in false whiskers and professors' gowns, and asked if he did not intend to enter for the scholarship examination in music next week. Everyone in Oxford was saying what a musician he was. Now, as they very well knew, Smith *was* an excellent musician. Naturally he jumped at the chance. Then the jokers rented a hall, had printed fictitious examination papers and paid a number of Townees to put on gowns and pretend to be engrossed in the same examination paper. It cost them altogether three pound six. Three days after the examination Smith was informed that he had made an excellent showing, and was requested to present himself for the final *viva voce* at four o'clock on the following afternoon. By this time news of the affair had spread from college to college, and when the abashed Smith presented himself for his final oral he found the hall crowded to its doors. He stood up before what seemed the gowned and whiskered old dons, and thereupon was handed over to sing. He was surprised to see, not the usual classical fragments, but a number of the most ridiculous music-hall ditties. The examiners sternly explained that this provided a more crucial test, and valuable scholarships were not to be flung about for the asking. Smith did his best. But you may imagine the astonishment of the bewildered candidate when he was asked by the first academic dignitary how much plum jam his mother had put up that autumn, while a second old rascal insisted on knowing

if Smith had any pretty sisters, and if any of them were coming up for the Eights.

Happily Smith had the strength and the character to live it all down. The result was not quite so unfortunate as that later case, of which you have probably read in the English press, where the "Captain of the Upper River" had to be quietly taken away from the university by his father, with his Oxford life ruined forever. This, among other things, goes to show the Englishman has not a very big bump of humor. He is never humorous; he is seldom witty, although he has a weakness for wit. I knew an American at Brasenose, whom one could never find in his rooms, so assiduously was he invited out, and courted and sought for. He was in the habit of explaining to his



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The new Conductor of the Ladies' Glee Club.