

THE VARSITY.

A Weekly Journal of Literature, University Thought and Events.

VOL. XVI.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, DECEMBER 16, 1896.

No. 10.

MUSIC AND TEARS.

We sat where the yellow moonlight
Streamed thro' the August trees
And fell in leafy shadows
Over the ivory keys.

Sweet was the night and languid,
Gently the curtains swayed,
And oh! the warmth and passion
Of the soft airs she played.

The music throbbed and floated,
And filled the shadowy room,
And the roses at the casement
Breathed forth their sweet perfume;

But something strange and tender
Had smote upon my heart,
And the strains of that lovely music
Made burning tear-drops start.

And in that passionate moment
I knew that life was sore,
And felt its pain and longing
As I'd never felt before.

Ah, strange that the peace serenest
Should stir man's soul most deep,
And strange that the highest beauty
Is that which makes us weep.

JAS. A. TUCKER.

GLIMPSES OF OXFORD.

III.

The vast majority of the Great Ungowned forms its conception of Oxford from reminiscences of youthful readings of Verdant Green, Pendennis, and Tom Brown. These good books, in their own day, may, or may not, have portrayed Oxford as it once existed. They certainly portray neither Oxford nor Oxford life as it exists at the present time. Outside of this source of information, the world gets an occasional glimpse of Oxford life from facts which come out in the periodic London divorce-suit of the English nobleman. All of these English noblemen, it seems, have been at Oxford; and all of them, it likewise seems, have, some time or other, been "sent down" (that is, expelled) from that University. In fact, it is forced on one that every nobleman in England, from Lord Rosebery to the husband of Consuelo Vanderbilt, has stepped into his broader sphere of social life by being "sent down" from the University of Oxford—where expulsion is an un-failing token of aristocracy. We, in America, see little of that Oxford literature, so popular in England, whose creators deal with University life in somewhat the same spirit as Colonel Richardson* dealt with early Canadian life, or as the Rev. Mr. Ballantyne and Fenimore Cooper dealt with our own poor, distorted, idealized Red Indian. So,

* You will remember in his "Wacousta" how the Indians stopped the English boats by felling trees across the St. Clair River—trees, I might add, at least one-half mile in height.

beyond these first-mentioned sources of information, our knowledge of Oxford ceases.

From the University itself, and the University authorities, you will find that you can learn nothing. As your letters ply across the wide Atlantic, the innumerable times you are referred from one academic official to another, reminds you very much of Mark Twain's Great Beef Contract, and the shortness of human life. Here, in the land of Principal Grant, it is only those who have attempted to glean a few facts relating to this University and its ways who know how absolutely, maddeningly impossible it is to gather in one enlightening word. You go to those graduates of Oxford who hold professorial positions in our midst, or perhaps to an English clergyman in some neighboring parish (they are always Oxford men), and, with true Oxonian courtesy, they load you down with information: but with information of an Oxford of sixty years ago. Then, to your joy, you hear, perhaps, that there is an Oxford man just come out to learn gentleman-farming with some honest husbandman back on the ninth concession, in the township of Lone Swamp. You search him out, and find him feeding the stock, in knickerbockers and a Norfolk jacket. He, too, with true Oxonian courtesy, will tell you, as he leans on his pitch-fork, all he knows of Oxford. He talks of "Torpids," and "Rugger," and "Wines," and "Soccer," and "Bump-Suppers," and "Rags," and "Divers," and "Leckers," and even Baccarat. And, leaning pensively on his pitch-fork, he will tell you, with a look of melancholy regret in his eyes, that Oxford is a jolly old place. You thank him, and go away wondering what it all means. For you have not yet learned that Oxford men are of many kinds, and that the Oxford student is known by his Oxford slang, just as a German student is known by the scars on his face.†

So it is quite natural that graduates of our own Universities should so seldom look toward Oxford when in search for higher academic standing, or when casting about them for a congenial place wherein to carry on the study of those early rudiments of a long education—an education, indeed, for which we find our lives so disappointingly short.

To the American college man who contemplates a post-graduate course for the study of some specialty alone, the German universities would certainly offer more inducements than either of the two great English seats of learning. But if his object is not so much the possession of mere scholarship and a "Doctor of Philosophy," as the search for sweetness and light, for culture in its deepest and broadest sense, with a corresponding elimination of the provincial, it would be well for him, perhaps, not to overlook Oxford. For, as Professor Bryce has said, the English universities avowedly were in the last century,

† Which is the more barbarous practice it would be hard to say. The most striking form of Oxford slang is the curtailing of a word and the addition of "er." Thus "Rugger" means Rugby, "Lecker," Lecture, "Father Ignagger," Father Ignatius, and so forth *ad nauseum*. As for the German scars, they are, of course, duelling scars. Students are inordinately proud of these atrocious marks; one university graduate I met in Germany last summer having no less than twenty-seven distinct scars on his face and head. He was a more envied man, I believe, than the Emperor himself.