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ISIS

OR

THE FUTURE OF OXFORD

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

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ISIS

OR

THE FUTURE OF OXFORD

BY

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" To the Memory of my Father "

ISIS

OR

THE FUTURE OF OXFORD

" Sir ", said Dr Johnson some hundred and fifty years ago, " young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in all respects." Such a tribute, from one who, in his time, insulted or derided fully one half of the greatest figures of the Augustan Age of English literature, cannot fail to be encouraging to this book which is about young men, and to its author who happens to be one.

But the posthumous encouragement of the illustrious dead, particularly when offset by the later opinion of Carlyle that " the true University of these days is a row of books ", would be insufficient

excuse for the writing of this essay, were it not for the many signs that the present generation, though largely, perforce, members of the university of Carlyle's foundation, yet still concur in Dr Johnson's dictum.

To be sure, save for the four-year interval of the war, the public of the twentieth century does not manifest such a healthy and uncritical veneration for its youngers as Dr Johnson has not hesitated to put on record; yet, though it may be convinced more of the decadence than of the virtue of young men, the significant fact remains, that it is intensely interested in their thoughts and doings.

It is this interest that has aroused the vogue for novels of adolescence; long self-analytical screeds, in which young men expose in all their details the novelty of the reasons for which they commit the same follies as their fathers and their grandfathers committed before them. It is this interest, much more significantly manifested, that has filled the gossip

columns, the sports columns, and the front pages of the newspapers with stories, frequently apocryphal, of the doings of undergraduates of Oxford and of Cambridge. Finally it is this interest that permits me to harbour hopes for the reception of this book, because it is a book by a young man and about young men.

It is a book about Oxford ; not the half-dozen Oxfords of Fleet Street, but *the* Oxford of The High, The Turl, The Bodleian, The Mitre, the Proctors' Offices and College rooms.

To view in the mind's eye the Oxford of the future requires a large initial expenditure of time on clearing the path of vision. At the best, all that we can hope to see is a passing glimpse of it through the tangled forest that is Oxford of the present ; and there the undergrowth is so thick that those in it often cannot see the wood for the trees ; while those outside it are in even worse plight. They

cannot even see the trees for the highly coloured hoardings that the Press has erected before their eyes.

The first portion of this essay must therefore be devoted first to pulling down the hoardings of publicity, and then to cleaning out the undergrowth of irrelevant detail, so that only the essential trees are left. Then, and only then, may we chance to see our vision of the Oxford of the future.

Fleet Street in itself is not to blame for the misconceptions of the universities that it fosters. They are produced according to the inexorable law of supply and demand. A conscientious journalist must know his subject; and his subject is not the Oxford University but the Oxford 'market'. It is the public that loves to read about the University, and lives at Clapham, Bury St Edmund's or the Hartlepools.

This public, just as it is interested in typists only when they attempt to swim the channel, in marriages only when they culminate in divorce, and Shakespeare

only when he is read by boxers, is interested in undergraduates only when they are occupied in some pursuit alien to the habits of the outside world. The Oxford of Fleet Street is therefore an abode of meretricious and expensive gaiety, not unmixed with innocent profligacy. Above all it is never dull like Clapham, Bury St Edmund's, or the Hartlepools. While the sons of a hundred nonentities may enter the University for each son of a distinguished man, it is only the latter who are mentioned in the records of Fleet Street. While a hundred mediocre enthusiasts may row, play rugger, soccer, or cricket, with undistinguished zeal, for every man who is tried for his blue, it is only the latter who are noticed in the newspapers. While a hundred sober celebrants may crowd the theatres after the boat-race, unscathed, for every one who ends his evening at Vine Street, it is only the latter who finds his way into print next morning.

The Oxford of Fleet Street is thus the Oxford of the Lime-Light; the Oxford

of cocktails, champagne and caviare; the Oxford of Blues and those who have just failed to get their blues; the Oxford of high spirits, 'Students rags', hoodwinked proctors, drunkenness, debauchery, suicide and sudden death. The storehouse of culture is lost in the storehouse of abnormalities.

As to the possibility that the University has a function apart from this—that it exists in order to teach young men to *think*: such a suggestion does not find its way into print. Democracy has inverted the aphorism of Descartes: "*Sum ergo cogito*", and the University has thus no need to reinforce in its sons a natural function of mankind. It might just as well teach them to breathe or to sleep. Instead it apparently allows them, at their own expense, to bring a breath of orgiastic entertainment to a jaded public, which sits back in its chair murmuring contentedly: "Boys will be boys", as it reads of them behaving as adolescent morons.

Now the all-pervading Oxford of Fleet

Street, though it may possess a value as an entertainment, as a source of class-war propaganda, or as a study of the psychology of the newspaper public, is *not* the true Oxford of the present, nor does it seem to bear that stamp of immortality that might render it the Oxford of the future. To dismiss it has helped us more to destroy an illusion than to find reality. And the illusory Oxford is comparatively coherent, while the true Oxford looks different from each portion of its territory. A book on Oxford starts with a problem as baffling as that of Pilate. It must first solve the great riddle of the University " What is Oxford ? "

To each member of the University there must be a perfectly definite impression of it, but it is an impression that is unformulated, and if it were formulated might well be incomprehensible to his fellows. There would be some points of resemblance between these rival impressions but there would be no common denominator of the whole. For there are

at least four distinct classes of undergraduates ; the athletes, the aesthetes, the students, and the full-blooded intellectuals : and in the extreme cases their several orbits in the University scarcely impinge on one another.

The athlete is as ignorant of the habits of the aesthetes as he is of the aborigines. He is aware that both of them occur in Oxford, chiefly at Balliol ; but his knowledge of them goes no further. What he is interested in is sport, and what he is ambitious for is a Blue. Normally his conversation is restricted to his interests and his friendships to those who share them. Except for three frenzied weeks in June the examination schools exert no influence upon him, and his intellectual efforts, which are confined to those three weeks, are restricted to the bare minimum of the syllabus that is required for a pass degree. He then goes down and builds an Empire or breaks a business, by his equally well-meant endeavours in that state of life to which he may be called.

The aesthete in his turn is equally,

though more self-consciously, unaware of the existence of the athlete. Being a social man, his interests are restricted largely to those parties and poses in which he figures, which may involve a worship of Gauguin or Gogol, Tchekov or Tchaikowski. He will talk extravagantly about all of these, but most of all he will gossip about his friends. In a self-deprecating way he frequently works hard for finals, in which his wide though desultory reading gives him considerable indirect assistance in the older schools. At the end of three years he departs and Mr St John Ervine writes an article to the *Observer* about the Oxford Manner.

The athlete and the aesthete may at least be said to leave some small mark upon the social life of the University; but even this cannot be said for the student. He reads his text-books, writes his essays, attends his lectures, talks about it, takes his examinations and is gone. To his credit, it must be confessed that though frequently he fails to get that First which is his ambition, he seldom

falls below a Second, and at the end achieves a moderate pensionable success in life—the backbone of England even if not the brains. Oxford, as a whole, is as ignorant of his departure as it was of his presence.

But if Oxford ignores the student, the intellectual (if we are to believe *Alma Mater*) [1] ignores Oxford. He is too occupied in passing judgment upon the Universe to notice the University at his feet. Apparently he devotes himself to weighing life in the balance and finding it wanting (not the balance of course, but life); or else he spends his energies in furthering a vague and undefined 'conspiracy' to place an international, pacific, infinitely boring God, in a neat economic heaven with H. G. Wells as his prophet and Sir Rennell Rodd as his scourge upon Earth. These intellectuals are the sole inhabitants of the Oxford of *Alma Mater*.

There was a doggerel fable of our childhood days that dealt with the examination

[1] *Alma Mater*: Julian Hall (To-day and To-morrow Series, 1928).

of an elephant by three blind men. One of them, "happening to fall against its broad and sturdy back, at once began to bawl: 'God bless me, but the elephant is very like a wall!'" The other two chancing to come in contact with its legs and tail respectively, advanced their considered opinions that the elephant was like a tree and like a rope. The moral of the fable was expressed succinctly in the final stanza. Its application to the present topic requires no elaboration

Oxford is not the Oxford of the athlete, the aesthete, or the student. Nor is it in the least more like the Oxford of *Alma Mater*. It is the mean of these four extremes, with the extravagances toned down.

The normal undergraduate is not wholly athlete, wholly aesthete, wholly student, or wholly intellectual. He is a mixture of them all; very similar, in fact, to young Mr Smith of Surbiton, if Mr Smith of Surbiton had by any chance the leisure also to be learning to think.

It is only because this volume is

intended to deal with the University as a centre of culture that we are occupied chiefly with the intellectual side of undergraduate life; but it must never be forgotten that even though there is a large class of men that may be considered as 'thinking men', yet there is an even larger class that cannot confidently be said to think at all. For the moment we may dismiss them from our discussion; yet they, the intellectually poor, we shall have always with us, and they will return again to this volume to play a very essential part. *They will be the suspenders by which the University may escape out of the whale of commercialism: and in the words of Mr Kipling, "You must never forget the suspenders".*

For the moment we must desert the undergraduates of Oxford for the young philosophers of *Alma Mater*. This is a digression that need not prove fruitless, for the consequent destruction of the young philosopher should lead to the discovery of the real undergraduate.

THE FUTURE OF OXFORD

The inhabitants of *Alma Mater* are divided into two diametrically opposed groups: 'The Conspirators' and 'The Sceptics'. The former we shall deal with first; for, though negligible in numbers, Mr Hall regards them as the chief influence of the University of the future —that barren technical-school-cum-laboratory that is to occupy the place of Oxford.

They are apparently what is loosely styled 'scientists', prophets *in statu pupillari*, working for a nebulous Utopia of world-wide boundary that will have learnt from the mistakes of this age, not that human nature is still human nature, but that perfection is an upper form in the school of education. They are in fact the 'Open Conspirators' of H. G. Wells.

The word 'conspirators' is convenient; undoubtedly they exist, in the persons of the serious little men, the enthusiasts of the University. But it is no comprehensive conspiracy for which they are working. They may be fanatics of politics, sociology, literature, religion or

art; but the conservative conspirator would not be seen talking to the socialist conspirator; the literary conspirator would be unable to recognize his sociological brother; while the religious conspirator would look upon the artist as an *advocatus diaboli* or a potential convert, according to his own particular religious conspiracy.

Even in the camps of each conspiracy there is no coherent policy because there is no coherent aim. The socialist may be a Distributist, a State Socialist, a Guild Socialist, Syndicalist, Communist or merely a future Cabinet Minister; and the discussions of that Cabal the Labour Club are frequently more acrimonious than their debates with the Conservative Association, whose members are equally disunited in aim.

Sociological conspirators may be anything, and frequently on examination are found to be nothing. Birth Control or Anti-birth Control, Adam Smith or Malthus, Co-operation or Small Holdings,

Free Love or less divorce, any of these and a thousand more may occupy their enthusiasms, until a meeting of each of the serious sociological clubs, has become, like the college chapels, a place where literally two or three are gathered together.

The literary conspirator is the most vocal of them all. Sporadic and insolvent journals testify to the diversity of his aims, which will run the gamut of carefully acquired theories on "punctuation in poetry, symbolism in silk-hats, realism in rhetoric, vorticism in verse, etc., etc". (To quote *The Isis* of June, 1929.) It is impossible to descry even a coherent literary Utopia among these *il*-literary flaneurs

Among the religious organizations, there is certainly more evidence of a conscious aim towards an Ideal, but the ideal is in the next world, not in the next century, and the paths that lead to it are various though strait. It may be with incense and genuflection; it may be

with a simple faith that looks upon evangelization as it might look upon a day's shooting, reckoning up the bag of converts in 'braces'; or it may be with a hail-fellow-well-met-un-sectarian-prayer-meeting type of religion that the ultimate end is to be approached; but the conspiracy for the betterment of this world is only incidental to the entry into the next.

Of Mr Hall's conspirators, the Scientist is said to be the guiding influence of them all. If by scientist is meant one who studies in the science schools and laboratories of Oxford, then it must be confessed that the Scientist is the one type of man from whom the conspirators are *not* drawn. The carefully graded curriculum, in lecture rooms and in the laboratory, keeps his mind healthily occupied during the day, to the exclusion of such topics as are not of immediate assistance to him in the examination schools. In him, almost alone, there is no sign of any strivings to make the world a spiritually different, if not a

better, place. The scientist has *no* conspiracy at all.

And if the conspirators have no comprehensive conspiracy, the sceptics are under an even worse handicap. They are practically non-existent.

"The sceptic sees our lives as shaped by circumstances; all of them appear fortuitous; thus he cannot regard them as significant, or attempt to gain control of them. . . . The sceptic thinks of no subject as innately serious; he sees no hierarchy of values in human activity; no subject, no institution, no principle has an intrinsic claim on his respect; no action has in its own right any importance or significance; everything for him is on one plane of seriousness." [1]

There is more, much more, of what the sceptic thinks, but it may be summed up in four words. It is an 'uncertainty of the age'.

Now undoubtedly there are some young men who fit into this classification. In

[1] *Alma Mater*, p. 43.

my time at Oxford I knew four—no more, and one of them was a fellow of All Souls. But the average man who is classed in *Alma Mater* as a sceptic is, in reality, nothing of the sort. He is uncertain not of *the* Age but of *his* age. No one is more conscious of immaturity than the normal intelligent undergraduate. He sees the enthusiast given up to beliefs and endeavours which to the youthful observer are infinitely ridiculous. He has laughed at the passion with which others can support a cause that is clearly absurd, and he is well aware that any enthusiasm, that he himself may support, is likely to prove equally ridiculous to his fellows. That does not preclude him from having beliefs and enthusiasms. They are there all the time, but they are masked through fear of ridicule. They arrive at the surface only after midnight, at one of those conversations which together with visits to the cinema, form so large a feature of University life, when he is sufficiently carried away to have forgotten

his fear of being found out in his fundamental beliefs. Even then, they come out hesitatingly. He is not confident of their righteousness, for he remembers his own fallibility, and that last week he thought differently, and that next week he may think differently again. For the rest, if he mentions them at all, he mentions them laughingly, for then his hearers are laughing with him and not at him, and he is a wit and not a clown.

This cynicism, with which he disguises his enthusiasms in a cloak of levity, is a racial characteristic. A student of the Latin races is no less ephemeral in his beliefs, but as each one seizes him, he seizes it, and broadcasts it to the world. That is why the universities in Spain have occasionally to be closed by the dictator, and why the student quarters of the continental towns are breeding grounds of revolution in politics, in art, and in love.

The Latin changes his mental clothing time and again, but he dons his new garb with a swagger and parades it before the world. The English student, though

he changes no less frequently or fundamentally than his continental brother, has been brought up to believe that dressing is a function to be performed in private, and though his underclothing of ideas is changing, he still wears over it his cloak of cynicism; for he realizes that his changes take place too frequently for it to be worth while to remove the cloak from each garment. Sometimes of course, carried away by enthusiasm, and the thought that his present belief is eternal, he flings aside the cloak and comes out into the light of day, swaggering as a Latin in his garb of the conspirators, whose ranks are thereby temporarily swelled by his advent. More frequently he carries on his changes unseen until he has found the mental garment that fits him best. Then the habit of the cloak persists. Because the majority of his fellows are still trying their various changes of raiment, and are not yet certain of the fit, the cloak is the prevailing fashion, and he would as soon discard it as walk down Piccadilly in the garb of nature.

But this is far from scepticism. It is a spirit of enquiry and experiment hidden by racial reticence; and the whole of the intellectual life of Oxford points to this conclusion.

This didactic statement of the position is of little value, save as the opinion of one man. I must, in order, if not to convince, at least to attempt to convince, adduce my evidence by a survey of the intellectual life of the University. This will not include the lecture room, for however valuable a lecture may be from the intellectual point of view, it is evidence of the intellectual activity of the Dons alone, and they for the moment do not come into a survey of the state of mind of the younger generation. To the undergraduate a lecture is, at best, potted knowledge for the examination schools; at worst, it is just a waste of time.

Instead we must look at the Union, the University Newspapers, the Intellectual Clubs, and the social life, for there the

undergraduate occupies his not inadequate leisure, and there of all places we are most likely to find him in his natural state.

The Union might indeed be thought to be the home of cynicism, as surely as it is the breeding place of Cabinet ministers. It is the soil from which springs the epigram, that ' concise statement with no meaning ', as a Union speaker himself put it. Yet, though a man may change his allegiance to his party several times, and a socialist motion may be passed one week and a die-hard motion the next ; the successful man at the Union has invariably been the consistent man—the man with an ideal. His fellows may laugh at him, and he, in the coffee room, half-heartedly laugh at himself, but when it comes to an election of a president they vote for him. Of the three undergraduate sceptics whom I knew, two spoke frequently at the Union, and both failed signally to become President, though they were in each case the most suitable men for the post.

There is one other point; in the whole of my four years there was only one scientist who spoke at the Union, and that was myself.

Take again the Undergraduate Press, a point on which Mr Hall lays great stress in his examination of this scepticism that is such a peculiar feature of the age. I have looked through a file of *The Isis* dating back to 1899, and there is practically no change in contents or in style during the whole of those thirty years. The short stories always end in suicide dealt with in the most serious spirit. The leaders all contain criticisms of the University or the Universe couched in that flippant tone that has been the standard of University journalism ever since it was founded. And the significance of this tone is not that it is flippant criticism but that it is criticism. That in itself connotes a feeling of discontent with the present, and a desire to improve it in the future. It is, in short, typical of a refusal to take things for granted, and of a widespread spirit of

enquiry that has existed unchanged, at least as far back as my files of *The Isis* extend.

There is one further point, except for a medical student, who subsequently became a journalist, there was only one scientist who wrote for the University Papers, and that was the same exception as in the Union.

Leaving the Union and the Press for the intellectual clubs, the English Club, the Poetry Society, the Thomas More Society, and all the host of College debating, literary, and philosophical clubs, the tale still remains the same. There is discussion ; there is flippancy ; there is a presentation of a thousand points of view, and one man will often take up a point of view purely for the sake of argument ; but in the end, towards eleven o'clock, though the meaning of 'Beauty', 'Justice', 'Virtue', 'Poetry' 'Life' and 'Love' may be called in question, there has never lacked at any of these gatherings, a dozen young men willing to venture a definition that

Solomon himself would have never dared to state. The definition may readily be destroyed, but both its genesis and its death are but symptoms of the spirit of enquiry that may be found at the root of all those manifestations of, what Mr Hall is pleased to call, the Scepticism of the modern generation.

There is one further point. In the whole of my four years, no scientist, with one exception and that the same as before, has ever to my knowledge manifested himself at these meetings, either by participation or even by physical presence.

Yet perhaps the most intimate and most valuable source of information as to what undergraduates are thinking (if indeed in spite of the journalists they employ that obsolescent process at all), is in the social gatherings that centring round a cask of beer or cocktail-shaker last far into the night with small talk and just talk. You will hear much gossip there, for your intellectual Oxford is as close a corporation as the *élite* of any suburb. You will hear cynicism there

too; but it is the cynicism of the University Newspapers, the cynicism of discontent rather than of despair. Most of all you will hear conversation (often sparkling) on a variety of topics as wide as the world; prose, poetry, painting, sculpture, philosophy, economics, education, love and life itself, dealt with, perhaps flippantly, perhaps seriously, perhaps superficially, perhaps deeply, but dealt with in a spirit of interest and of genuine criticism, and dealt with automatically because it happens to be what the speakers think about. There is more spirit of enquiry in one intellectual cocktail party than there is in half a hundred lectures on 'The Constitution of the Amines', or 'The Properties of Matter'.

There is one further point, in the whole of my four years, with only the one same exception there was no scientist who appeared at an intellectual party, or assembled to discuss art, literature, life or even love. The close corporation of intellectual Oxford does not include the scientist, and he himself is generally as

blissfully unaware of its existence as he is of his own exclusion.

There are two conclusions that have arisen from this survey. The first is that what Mr Hall describes as scepticism may be more truly called open-mindedness, and that is the prevailing influence in the Oxford of to-day, as it was in the Oxford of yesterday. The second is that there are three main exceptions to this influence: the Conspirators, the true Sceptics and the Scientists. The two former classes are in a very great minority, and their influence on the University and the world is evanescent.

The conspirator in the University is laughed at, and often with good reason. In after-life he becomes a decent citizen with some little crank such as writing letters to *The Times*, serving on committees, or addressing meetings in Hyde Park. In the exception he may become a great leader of men; but generally the leader of men is selected from the ranks

of those who have kept an open mind during their university days and closed it after they have reached the outside world.

The rare sceptic in the university is generally hated and respected, for he is drawn from among the cleverest men of his time. But the outside world, though it may not destroy his scepticism, at least revives his interest in life. There is his living to earn, and he sets about it with increasing enthusiasm. Being intelligent and unfettered by ideals, he prospers, and settles in his groove with a proprietory interest in the *status quo*. He becomes in fact nothing more formidable than a conservative.

The Scientist is left to be dealt with. So far he has baffled classification. He cannot be ranked among the conspirators, unless as a member of a great conspiracy for defeating the examiners each June. He cannot be ranked among the sceptics who have weighed life in the balance and found it wanting, for the balance is to him a strictly practical apparatus for weighing chemicals in preparation for

'The Honours School of Natural Science', and he has no time nor inclination to put it to its metaphorical use. He cannot be ranked among the open-minded, for his first three years are devoted to acquiring technical knowledge amassed by others, and his last year to elucidating some minutia of technical detail, such as in my own case "The Photochemical Addition of Iodine to Beta-phenyl Propiolic Acid in Chloroform Solution" which, though it may perhaps be said to add to the sum total of knowledge in the world, can hardly be claimed to embrace a very large portion of it.

Thus he is no conspirator, no sceptic, no open-minded enquirer. There has been found no niche for him in the intellectual life of Oxford. There has indeed been found no trace of him at all. And the reason for this is simple. He plays *no* part in the intellectual life of Oxford.

In the survey of The Union, the University Press, the intellectual clubs, and the social life, which together compose the Intellectual Life of Oxford; the men

who occur in every manifestation of it are those who are reading Greats, Modern Greats, History, English, Jurisprudence —in brief, all those subjects where reasoning rather than mere classification is required. The men who do not occur at all in any of it, are those who are reading Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Modern Languages—in brief all those subjects where classification and memory are used almost to the exclusion of reasoning. It is these latter that I have called 'Scientists'; partly because of the great part the scientist plays in the future of Mr Hall's Oxford, but mainly because the scientist is the worst offender and most typical of them all.

This voluntary exile from the intellectual life of the University, may, in fact, be said roughly to be coincident with the boundaries of the Modern Schools at Oxford, and the participation with the boundaries of the Older Schools. While the intellectual life itself is characterized by a spirit of open-minded enquiry.

THE FUTURE OF OXFORD

Without venturing into any theory of education, for that is a subject that is discussed at the midnight sittings of the sociological clubs, without ever coming to a satisfactory conclusion, I have accepted as a premise that the ideal of the University should be, not the addition of minutiae to the sum total of knowledge, not even the creation of a society of specialists; but simply a training ground of thought. The ideal university should teach its sons, not *what* to think, but just to *think*. It should give them the world as their own oyster to open. If, on opening it, they find at length that it is just like the same oyster of every other man, they have at least learnt how to open it. . . . But there is always a chance that in opening it they will find a pearl. If, on the other hand, instead of handing them the oyster, it explains to them, with diagrams and demonstrations, exactly what the inside of it looks like, and that all oysters are the same; that pearl that may be hiding there will never be discovered, and the

student will be still unskilled in the opening.

Since then we have decided that the fostering of a spirit of enquiry and of open-mindedness cannot be bettered as the ideal of a university as a seat of culture; the real line of demarcation in the Oxford of the future, will be, not between the conspirators and the sceptics, not between the youthful idealists and the youthful cynics, but between the participants and non-participants in the intellectual life of Oxford as it is to-day. The rivalry is thus between the old and the modern cultures.

It may perhaps be objected that the question of participation in the intellectual life of the University turns not upon the School which the undergraduate happens to be reading, but upon his personal inclinations. Some men are born to open oysters, others to accept a description of their interiors at second hand.

It may perhaps be objected that it is all a coincidence, and that I personally have been unfortunate in my generation of scientists. But it is a coincidence that has lasted four whole years, which in a University means the birth and death of four whole generations. Like the butterfly the undergraduate is born in full possession of his faculties, and like the butterfly he sips lightly at the flowers of knowledge and departs. All the more reason that the University must exclaim "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin*".

Lastly it may, though I hope it will not, be objected that I am simply lying, and that actually there is no such division between the representatives of the old and the modern cultures.

Therefore, the onus lies on me of showing that there is something inherent in the older Schools that leads to intellectual enquiry, and something in the modern Schools that reacts against this spirit.

Let us take first what, for obvious reasons, I have called the older culture.

Academic historians may point out to me that natural science was studied before English was written, and that Euclid wrote before most of the philosophers of Lit. Hum; and their objection would be quite correct. But there is a perfectly comprehensible distinction between what I mean by the older culture and the new. The older is the victorian "Education of a Gentleman" in the good old days when chemist ranked with apothecary, as a 'tradesman' and the old amalgamation of leech and barber was not yet quite forgotten.

In the older culture we may rank the Schools of Greats, Modern Greats, English Literature and Language, History and to a lesser extent Law; all of them Schools which do not lead straight to pensionable posts of £400 a year for those who can proudly point to a first or second class in their final examinations. They are in fact the 'impractical' schools, for no one reading them may be said directly to have qualified the life of business; only for the business of life,

which is not so lucrative a profession. Even Law may be included among these, for it is common knowledge among lawyers that a B.C.L. (Oxon) seldom prospers in his solicitor's examinations, and the Fellows of All Souls have been known to take thirds in the Bar Prelims. And of these impractical schools Greats must be acknowledged to be the idea and model of them all.

Stephen Leacock in his discovery of England incidentally discovered Oxford, and with singular acuteness noted that the Oxford tutor had a method of his own. For three years he *smoked* at his pupils, at the end of which time they departed, filled with the divine afflatus of their alma mater.

The tutor whom Stephen Leacock chanced to see, is bound, from the very description, to have been a Greats tutor. Stephen Leacock saw the smoke, and in his transatlantic haste forgot that 'there is no smoke without a flame', and the flame in this case was the flame of enquiry. A tutorial on Plato may well start with

the *Republic*, but it may equally well end with the constitution of *Erewhon* or the United States, or even a description of the best cafés of Vienna. A tutorial on Nietzsche may start with the *uebermensch*, but it will probably end with an account of the way in which the veins on Bismarck's neck swelled when he was enraged, or even a discussion of the theory of Free Love. While a tutorial on Aristotle may not improbably devolve into a panegyric of Greyhound-Racing or a dissertation upon the psychology of the subconscious mind.

The weekly or bi-weekly essay, that is presented then, is judged not as a précis of the text-books or (a useful dodge this) a translation of an article from the *Grand Larousse*: but as an example of independent reasoning power, opening the portals to the realms of seeming irrelevancies that are in reality the chief charm and value of Greats.

And if the tutors are filled with the dilettante spirit of their subject, the examiners are equally kind. They have

no desire to enthrone Pelman on the pedestal of Minerva. To gain a safe second class in Greats requires a memory phenomenal among young men; to get a brilliant first needs infinitely less. An active reasoning faculty is very much more valuable than a strict application to the text-books; and a man who, like Dr Johnson, rises early in the morning that he may have for so many hours longer 'the consciousness of being', is more likely to figure highly in the class-lists, than his fellow who gets up at a similar hour to enjoy the consciousness of working.

I do not mean to suggest that it is possible to pass four years in Oxford without opening a text-book, and then enter the examination schools in the happy faith that one will gain a First. But I do mean to suggest that a little reading of the text-books and a lot of thinking will serve far better than a lot of reading of the text-books and a little thinking.

This conspiracy among the senior

members of the University to dissuade the student of Lit. Hum from a soul-searing adherence to the limits of his subject has its inevitable effect upon the pupil. The time dedicated by the University to his subject is restricted to two tutorials, of an hour's duration each, during the week, and about a dozen lectures which the majority of undergraduates do not attend after the first flush of the terminal good resolutions has worn off. Even if he does, a moment's mental arithmetic (which for the sake of accuracy I have myself worked out on paper) assures us that there is left to him a minimum of 154 hours in which to eat, drink, sleep, and to prepare his two weekly essays. Roughly, if you take the average undergraduate, for three years at least, he has 150 hours a week to amuse himself, with only the check of nature on his activities; while 20 hours is the maximum which he *need* devote to the study of his school.

Such a large proportion of leisure may well be dangerous when looked upon from the strictly materialistic eight-hour

day point of view of the industrial world ; but, in that leisure may be *intellectual leisure*, it is a most valuable asset in fostering that spirit of enquiry that we have taken as the ideal of the University.

Some men may use all that leisure in a way that is the reverse of intellectual, in rowing, playing tennis, rugger, cricket, hunting, walking, etc. etc. Others may devote it wholly to attending the cinema or drinking gin. But the fact that ample provision of leisure may be abused does not affect our argument. We are dealing with the 'thinking men' and "Have you forgotten the suspenders?"

In the main it may be said to be spent by the thinking man as intellectual leisure, in talking and in reading, though the talk may be as diversified as has already been pointed out in the survey of Oxford intellectual life, and the reading may vary from Edgar Wallace, through Sinclair Lewis, Gertrude Stein, and James Joyce, to Rousseau, Kant, and Aristotle. It is its diversity that is its chief merit.

Dr Johnson, ever a sound judge of the conduct of life, could talk on any subject save the Punic Wars. The Greats man will follow him in his catholicity of conversation without the Carthaginian exception; for your Punic raconteur was only the specialist of the eighteenth century, and the scientific raconteurs of Oxford seldom cross the path of the Greats man in his leisure.

Such an opportunity for multiplicity of interests has borne the inevitable fruits, that we have already noticed in the Union, the Press, the Clubs, and in the Social Life—a spirit of open-mindedness in youth. That fruit is not an end in itself. Hidden it is the seed of a more valuable product, a sense of proportion in after-life, that is the chief value of an Oxford schooling.

But the Greats School does more than assist its followers to enquire the why and wherefore of life, by placing more stress on brains than memory, and presenting them with the precious gift of intellectual leisure. It chooses in advance

the type of man who alone has the opportunity to use that intellectual leisure. It is an 'impractical' school, except in so far as it may fit a man to teach the young, and thus breed more scholars for its 'impracticability', and judged from a purely materialistic standpoint no one is likely to be a better chartered accountant, bank-clerk, farmer, motor salesman or even crossing sweeper, for a first in Greats. Anyone who enters the University with the idea of graduating and settling down immediately to a nice safe employment on the recommendation of his degree, must devote his time to one of the sciences rather than to the older schools.

As a result these latter are comparatively free from that academic incubus, the job-hunter, and the degree in Greats can be given in a spirit different from that certificate of three years' moderate industry, that is the B.A. degree of the Science Schools. It is significant that the majority of recruits for the older culture are drawn from the Public

Schools; from a class where there is still sufficient affluence to allow a son to pause for four years before he has to bring grist to the family mill instead of taking it away. . . . And this I fear is where this essay becomes 'snobbish' and glories in it.

It would however be too long a task to attempt to justify snobbishness *per se*, though it is a task that would well repay the time spent on its elaboration. What concerns us now is a matter of economics; and if through economic circumstance it is impossible for a young man to 'waste' four years of his youth, then, if he is to go to Oxford at all, the School that he reads there must be one in which a degree is a passport to immediate employment. Such a function, it will be shown later, is performed by the modern schools at Oxford, and its reaction on them will be traced. For the moment it suffices to note that Greats cannot of its very nature attract the job-hunter, and thus its personnel is drawn from those who have the leisure to use, not their memories, but their minds.

We may sum up the influence of the older culture thus: Its adherents, being unhampered by too slavish concentration on a curriculum, are given leisure to employ their minds on other matters (that is why we have met them in our survey of the Oxford intellectual life); and being drawn from the class that is under no economic necessity of earning an immediate livelihood it is in no danger of standardization. It is in fact the ideal of our university as a centre of general culture, and the danger to it lies not within, but without. It lies in the growth of the modern or science Schools which in their turn will now repay our attention.

I had intended at this point to append a dictionary definition of Science that would justify my classification of the modern Schools under this head. Unfortunately there is none. But the Science of the modern Schools at Oxford is the Science of Hilaire Belloc's Newdigate Poem—Science, ' to be pronounced as a monosyllable in the Imperial fashion.'

In it I include the Schools of Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Medicine, and to a lesser extent the Modern Languages, though their relegation to this group is more the fault of their personnel than of an inherent defect in their subject matter. They are all Schools of a direct immediate use in finding a means of livelihood. Putting it concisely, they are the ' practical ' schools.

Of these Chemistry, largely because I personally have suffered most at its hands, will do as the model and ideal of them all.

The science tutor seldom smokes at his pupils. He appreciates that he is paid to teach his pupils that tobacco contains from 0.5 to 8.0 per cent. of the alkaloid nicotine, which may be synthesized by Pictet's synthesis from the ammonium salt of Pyromucic acid, or more up-to-date by Sharp's method from the ethyl ester of nicotinic acid. The smoke itself contains no such fascinating scientific truth. A tutorial with a science don, regards and rightly regards as

irrelevant to scientific studies, the constitution of *Erewhon*, free love, the cafés of Vienna or even the veins on Bismarck's neck. To a scientist these are all one, for they are all nothing. A tutorial is a lesson with no dilettante nonsense of irrelevancy about it. The chief subject of discourse is the weekly essay on a subject clearly defined and abstrusely technical; and after the first year it is an examination paper, for, since examinations are the goal of the science schools, it is impossible to gain too much practice in their methods.

If, through some unaccustomed perfection in the written products of the pupils, the technical point is exhausted before the hour is up, then there is always room for a discussion of some interesting question that has arisen in the laboratories or lectures during the past week. There is no limit to the gold to be dug from the mine of science, only it must all come from the same restricted seam.

The examiners, too, have no illusions as to the value of general speculation

in the future Works Chemist. They have a growing responsibility to the industrialists of the world. Through their honourable endeavours, a first in Chemistry has become a passport to the commercial laboratories of the Empire, and they would be false to their trust if they issued it to men who had not a deep knowledge of the more abstruse details of their trade. As a consequence the examination papers must lay most stress upon the technical details, and thus upon the memory, to the exclusion of the broad lines of theory that underlie the whole of Chemistry. The examinations are there to test chemists, not natural philosophers.

Such a system cannot fail to have its effects upon the lives and outlook of the men who read this school. Since the final criterion in the examination school is crammed knowledge, the whole curriculum is created to that end. It is no mere question of a couple of essays and a dozen lectures a week, with the rest of the time for leisure, and a dependence upon the personal initiative of the pupil.

Instead the day is arranged and docketed, so that at each hour one may safely predict, not only where the embryo chemist is, but what he is doing, even the book that he is reading and the exact chapter to which he will have reached if he has been working with a decent assiduity.

From nine until eleven each morning for three years, there are lectures; and your scientist, but for rare exceptions, attends his lectures, for they are designed exactly to cover the syllabus required. If he fails to attend, he does so at his peril. From eleven o'clock to one o'clock there is practical work to be done in the laboratories, and the explanation that one was wandering over Cumnor Hill speculating on the existence of God, will not appease a tutor as an excuse for non-attendance. The afternoon may justifiably be devoted to manly exercise; though many of the more successful chemists ascribe their triumphs to spending those extra hours in the laboratory. From tea-time until dinner, the labs are filled again with earnest students. After

dinner, six hours' work, according to a strict externally imposed schedule, having already been performed, the scientist is able and encouraged to do his own reading in the admirable scientific library provided in the Parks. His tutor will have already indicated the lines on which his reading should proceed, together with the best books for the purpose; and all that is left to the student is to go and read them, and to entomb his reading in his weekly essay.

This done, it leaves but little time for leisure, and, if he has been industrious, practically none for intellectual leisure. But the beneficent authorities who preside over the chemist have arranged that on two evenings a week that leisure may be spent in the most profitable fashion; for then over coffee, biscuits and cigarettes, there are meetings of the scientific clubs—the highest expression of social life among the Scientists. There, in an attitude of chemical abandon, he may discuss informally with his preceptors the latest advance in the Debye

and Huckel theory of complete dissociation of electrolytes, together with a digression on the Brönsted theory of the Neutral Salt Effect. And with this atmosphere about him all his years at Oxford you will find that, wherever three outstanding chemists are gathered together, and whenever the conversation has shifted from the latest film at the Super Cinema, it turns to the Debye and Huckel Theory, or a Synthesis of Tetra-hydro Quinoline.

To be sure, it is possible for any chemist to obtain his own leisure by idling or by direct rebellion at the curriculum, but there are remarkably few men who take either of these courses and the reason for this paucity of idlers and revolutionaries is inherent in the character of the Chemistry School.

Just as the character of Greats had its influence on the type of recruit to it, so the character of chemistry influences the class of man from which the science student is drawn.

Let us become snobbish again without concealment.

The chemist and with him most of the recruits to the other Modern Schools is drawn from the class to which the magic letters B.A. (Oxon) must be an immediate commercial asset. He is drawn much more from the Grammar School and the Secondary School, than from the Public School. He has been brought up already on a system of education that is based on a very different theory from that much criticized and perhaps inadequate theory that still dominates the Public Schools. He is in fact a specialist, if not a technician, before he enters Oxford, and since he is in a majority in the Science Schools, the curriculum must be adapted to his needs. He has a right to dictate his own terms to the academic authorities, and that right he has exercised with the greatest success.

What the commercial world demands, and therefore what he desires to be, is not an independent thinker, but a standard product that can be relied upon to *know* what the next man knows, and to perform his routine duties as an automaton.

To the commercial world the letters B.A. must be a trade-mark, and the goods protected by its stamp must be graded as accurately as Danish eggs into their classes; 1st Class, 2nd Class, 3rd Class, and Pass, which last would correspond to "Eggs". It would be useless if under 1st Class were grouped the eggs that, as in Greats, might prove on hatching to contain a cock, a bantam, a turkey or even a tarantula.

Dons who have corrected examination papers from the provincial universities tell me that each year those papers are becoming increasingly easy to mark. Instead of each one being judged upon its own merits, they are conforming to a standard that is uniform for them all. It is no longer necessary to consider whether the examinee has devoted his time to original thought, for in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he has not. All that is required is to estimate how much he has remembered of the lectures that he has attended and the text-books that he has read; for all have attended

the same lectures and read the same text-books, and, in the First Class student, the actual words of the lecturer may be inferred from a comparison of half-a-dozen papers.

That is the standard to which the Modern Schools of Oxford are also tending; and the vicious circle, into which they have fallen, is rolling them there with ever-increasing velocity. The job-hunter, the embryo technician from the Grammar Schools, demands a standardized education; the standardized education attracts the job-hunter and repels the thinking man. Once started the University is powerless to stop the process, and already the Science Schools are too deeply embedded in their groove to hope to raise themselves out of it. The Science Fellows are being recruited, not from the old generation of dons, but from the standardized products of the Oxford School of Chemistry, and already the vested interests of standardization here are too firmly entrenched to be removed. They must go on as they

have begun, until they reach their ideal, already approached by the American and Provincial Universities, of a mass-produced graduate with the University guarantee to play his correct part in the commercial machine.

My scientific training prevents me from claiming at this point that I have proved my case; but I can at least claim to have advanced a reason, however controversial, to account for that absence of Scientists in the intellectual life of the University that our earlier survey showed to be the case. There is a perfectly definite line that may be drawn between the participant in the intellectual life of the University and the non-participant, and that line corresponds roughly with the line between what I have termed the Old and the Modern Culture. It corresponds exactly to the line between the intellectual dilettante and the job-hunter; and it is inherent in the two opposed types of Schools that the old should attract the former and the new the latter. Therefore it follows

that if we are to maintain, as the ideal of Oxford, that open-minded spirit of enquiry that is typical of it to-day, we must retain the intellectual dilettante, and therefore the older Schools in their pride of place at Oxford.

The future of Oxford as a cultural centre stands or falls with Greats in its rivalry with Science. That is the true line of demarcation in the University to-day.

To progress from an admittedly speculative analysis of Oxford in the present to a still more speculative prophecy of Oxford in the future is a dangerous step. The whole course of Oxford's progress may be radically altered at any point by fortuitous irrelevancies varying from war, pestilence, famine, and sudden death among the dons, to a change in Government or even if we are to believe the Pyramid Prophets, a belated manifestation of the recent Armageddon.

To protect myself I must except from

my prognostications the chance of some external change of this nature, and restrict myself to those which are wrapped up in this rivalry between the old and the new cultures, which is the outstanding feature of the University to-day.

Even with this restriction, at the very beginning of our prophecies there marches across our path that fundamental human irrelevancy—woman; that sturdy band of Amazons who have flooded the outer suburbs of Oxford with their colleges and lodgings, and overcrowded the lecture rooms and libraries with their studious forms.

The woman student cannot be studied from the same point of view as the male undergraduate; nor can they strictly speaking be judged from the simple standpoint of their sex. They are a race apart, in whom the narrowest academic virtues have taken the place vacated by the caressing virtues, and their influence cuts right across that division that can be assessed so satisfactorily for the mere male.

There has been more nonsense talked about women at Oxford than there has on any other subject of Oxonian affairs. After each Boat-Race or Rugby Football Match has been lost, graduates of the old school, from their vicarages in Berkshire or their tombs in the Athenaeum, flood out the newspapers with their lamentations of the effeminacy and decadence that the admission of women to their alma mater has caused. "Young fellows were not like that in their young day; they were young fellows not young females."

Yet in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, from the point of view of social or intellectual life, the woman student is no more a part of Oxford than the Morris motor-workers.

There is no daily exodus of intellectuals to the undergraduette salons of North Oxford. Only an occasional earnest rowing-man or conscientious worker will take tea in a café, or upon the river, with one of the less uncomely of their number —he may, indeed, become at length

engaged. Upon the intellectual life, with a very few exceptions they do not impinge at all.

It is true that the Poetry Society and the English Club rely upon the women's colleges for the rank and file of their membership, but the part they play in it has been accurately described in a recent number of *The Isis*. "A positive plethora of young women with a profound admiration for the unintelligible as such, formed the vast bulk of its membership . . . and settled down with conscientious righteousness to take themselves seriously", and the article goes on to describe again the enormous number of painstaking young women acquiring an aesthetic veneer.[1]

It may certainly be true that by sheer force of numbers they make their presence known at the various clubs open to members of both sexes, but beyond this purely passive participation in these clubs, they play no outstanding part.

In the English Club and the Poetry

[1] *The Isis* : June 1929.

Society alone has even their presence been noted, and there they have unfortunately made themselves the butt of the mordant wit of the, it must be confessed, often intellectually arrogant, undergraduate, by what *The Isis* calls, "pouring out on paper the thoughts that surge with painstaking spontaneity from their minds". It is the *painstaking* spontaneity, with which the woman student acquires her aesthetic veneer, that, being such an alien feature to the intellectual life of Oxford, has made her such a negligible factor in it.

But though we may dismiss her from an active part in the University, indirectly she brings her influence to bear upon it.

The competition to enter the women's colleges is unusually severe, and, as a necessary corollary, cramming is the criterion by which her suitability of membership is judged. Furthermore, it is an unfortunate fact that the female tradition of the leisured classes of this country does not involve three years at Oxford, and as a general rule the women

are recruited from the same type as the Science Schools—those whom I have stigmatized as job-hunters. Seventy per cent. of the women who attend Oxford are destined to teach, frequently in Government Schools. As a result they require that their education should be as standardized as that of any budding chemist.

The system of the women's colleges, even for Greats, is very different from that of the men. The students are not treated as responsible human beings with a right to intellectual leisure, but as schoolgirls with a rigid curriculum to follow. The women's colleges, in addition to borrowing the 'tutorial' system from the men, have added to it a system of their own. Twice or thrice a week there is held a 'coaching', restricted to a small class of women alone; and on those coachings the whole of the undergraduette's reading turns. At every point there is the guiding finger of her 'coach' to point the academic path that she should tread, and twice or thrice a

week there is that same coach to see that she has trodden it, and has not strayed down some intellectual by-path, that leads not to the examination schools.

With no tradition among the female dons, the modern method of culture has pervaded them all, and the woman student is turned out an efficiently graded, standardized, mass-produced product of the Oxford mill. The standard, as can be seen from the class lists in June, is not high, but it is at least uniform.

It is thus that her influence indirectly may affect the future of Oxford; not by the intimacy of her penetration of the monastic seat of learning, but by sheer force of numbers. Women students on the whole are turned out in the mass-produced school, but that affects themselves alone directly, and leaves the men unchanged. It is only when their numbers give them a majority in the examination schools that the influence of this extends to the other sex. Where the majority of entrants in an examination have been brought up under one system, they can,

and do, dictate the principles on which the judging of that examination shall be carried out. Thus the mass-produced education of the job-hunters in the women's colleges demands a mass-produced method of grading in the final examinations; and where women are in a majority in a School, the men must also follow suit in the type of curriculum by which they prepare for that examination.

That is why I have included the Modern Languages in those schools that are representative of modern culture at Oxford; because in them the women students are in a majority and can dictate their terms. English, too, is in a fair way to falling to the same level, but at present the proportion of undergraduate dilettantes and, more potently, the traditional dons, keeps it representative of the old culture. Greats, though there are women reading it, is in no danger of falling from its high estate; for it is a comparatively valueless subject from the point of view of the embryonic female

teachers, who consequently are in an inconsiderable minority in it.

Women are thus outside the classification of the men into Scientists and Greats students, for their influence lies almost wholly with the modern culture; and if there were no restrictions on their numbers, there is but little doubt that the old ideal of Oxford with its spirit of enquiry would be in the gravest danger of extinction.

It is the parsons of Berkshire who (by the grace of God or narrow-minded prejudice) have saved the University from its fall through this cause. Within the last couple of years Convocation has passed a measure that will prevent the numbers of women students from rising to more than a quarter of the number of men, and thus the danger to the old culture does not come with greatest force from that quarter. Though if that measure were repealed and the rapid increase in the numbers of women, that it checked, allowed full scope again, it might be the salient factor in that future that we are trying to adjudge.

But there are other influences reacting towards the final victory of the modern culture that Convocation possesses neither the power nor the courage to cripple; and chief among these is the growth of democracy, that many-headed idol that the public cannot realize has feet of clay, and most of the heads of the same material.

"Oxford", say the democrats, "has been too long the playground of the cultured classes. Each man should have equality of opportunity to obtain the cachet of an Oxford Education."

Not content with the Provincial Universities they assault the citadel of the old culture itself. The State Scholarship system, to which each government in turn vows its allegiance, sends each year its candidates to Oxford and to Cambridge.

Now intrinsically there is absolutely no objection to the State-assisted Scholar at Oxford. In fact his advent might well be acclaimed with enthusiasm as an opportunity of recruiting for the cultured classes. In theory then the State Scholarship system is an unadulterated blessing, appealing to the spirit of fair play that

is at the bottom of every Englishman's heart. In practice it is the biggest curse of the University to-day.

A state scholarship is awarded by examination, and the examination is the mass-produced, standardized examination of the secondary schools; the intermediate examination of London University, and the senior external examinations of Oxford, Cambridge and some of the Provincial Universities. It is also the standard by which the size of the State Aid to the schools is assessed, and naturally it is the standard to which they work.

To work to a schedule in this manner is bound, of its very nature, to involve the old principle of cramming for this examination, and since the majority of entrants are crammed, the examination must of necessity be marked on the *same standard of cramming.*

The successful student is 'intelligent' from a strictly government departmental standard; which means that he possesses a phenomenal memory, and a strict application to the subject of his syllabus.

Evidence of personal speculation, even as to the subject under examination, is considered as nothing beside a detailed knowledge of the minutiae of the recognized text-book.

The most 'brilliant' boy, on this standard, is presented with a scholarship to proceed to a University. While Oxford was still the home only of the 'impractical' schools, he avoided her. The moment that Oxford surrendered and brought her Science Schools up-to-date, he began to flock there. The tradition still clinging to the name of Oxford was an attrac tion that swayed his decision, the moment that an Oxford degree became also a passport to a livelihood; for the allocation of State scholarships by an examination that tests industry rather than intelligence, effectually excludes those whose minds do not run in the traditional grooves. In addition the successful state scholar comes from an atmosphere where success as well as scholarship is assessed on materialistic standards, and from a class where economic conditions require

that he shall derive materialistic benefit from those three years that he 'wastes' at the University. He must, in fact, be assured of a well-paid job immediately on going down, that will compensate him and his family pecuniarily for those 'wasted' years.

In brief, he swells the numbers of the job-hunters at Oxford, and for that reason he generally devotes himself to the Modern Schools, and is, most particularly, to be found reading science. For there, by studious application to his lectures and the laboratories, he is assured of a post as Works Chemist or school-teacher at a comfortable competence, the moment that he has taken his degree. His object throughout his university life, is expressed, not in a spirit of enquiry, but in a solid and admirable determination to obtain a good degree.

That is why the state scholarship system is, to Oxford at least, not a blessing but a menace; and a menace that increases year by year. Already,

as we have seen, the scientists, their ranks swelled by the advent of the successful state scholar, have adapted their curriculum to his requirements; and though at present his influence is restricted to the Modern Schools, it is easily conceivable that successive democratic governments, assuring the electorate that the Oxford Tradition is a Public Trust, and that every English boy has an unalienable right to go there, will increase the numbers of state scholars at Oxford until they outnumber all the rest, and can dictate their terms to the other Schools, just as the job-hunters have already dictated them to the Modern Schools. That, in opening the Oxford tradition to every British Boy, they have destroyed the actual goose that lays the golden eggs, even if it occurred to a democratic government, could hardly find expression without offending the democratic electors on whose support the government depends.

If this influence were not combated by others, then might we well despair

of the future; but the tendencies that work in the opposite direction will be considered later. For the moment we must turn to another influence that is working in the same way.

This too, like the policy of democratic governments, is an external influence scarcely less potent than the former. It is the growth of Scientific Commercialism.

Industry in England, following belatedly the example of Germany, is calling for more and more scientists to assist it in its processes. These scientists must be trained somewhere, and somewhere where a degree is a perfectly standardized trademark; otherwise the commercial machine cannot function efficiently.

Once more the old tradition of Oxford attracts the future commercial scientist to her shrine. The business classes see that a degree in Science is a valuable investment for their sons; and Oxford, they have always heard, is a useful social asset for a young man. By sending their sons to Oxford or Cambridge, and to

these two alone, they can combine strictly business principles with social pleasure. Consequently the ranks of the job-hunters at the older Universities are swelled again, and the numbers of the Science Schools increase.

This is not all. From America the tradition has passed across the Atlantic, that no better monument to a departed millionaire can be evolved, than an endowment to a University preferably for the encouragement of the study of that subject that proved most valuable in amassing the fortune of the recently deceased benefactor. The Provincial Universities have flourished on this system for the last two decades; and now even Oxford is being invaded by the disastrous benefactions of the dead and even of the living. Within the past ten years the Parks have begun increasingly to bristle with the new laboratories dedicated to the cause of commerce, and built with money gained from that same cause. Yet another professorial chair has been established, and it is significant

that it has been dedicated to one of the Modern Schools, by a benefactor who rightly appreciates the value of that Modern School in the world of business. To-day the commercial classes are more and more endowing the older Universities with their money and their sons; and every benefaction and every son is going to increase the numbers of the Modern Schools, and to aid them in their rivalry with the old.

Side by side with this increase in the numbers of the scions of the business houses, there is a corresponding decrease in the recruits from the professional classes.

In the old University, before the war, it was the professional classes, in particular, that bred the cultured men of the day. The son of a professional man, who was often an old Oxford man himself, started with the initial advantage, from the point of view of the old culture, that his home influence was directed to a catholicity of intellectual interests, instead of being devoted to a discussion of mashie strokes in golf, the last rubber of

bridge, or business deals and methods. The old Oxford tradition that we have taken as our ideal, was the mental food on which he stood a very good chance of being reared in his professional family; and the foundation that was laid there, made him the best recruit to the older Schools at Oxford.

Now, with the War, there have come two differences in the economics of the situation; each of them tending to keep the sons of professional men out of the University. In the first place the income of the professional man has fallen, and in the second the cost of a University career has enormously increased. The result is that the professional classes, which are the intellectual backbone of the nation, if such an anatomical freak may be permitted as a metaphor, can no longer send their sons to Oxford and their places are being filled by those who can better afford the money.

So far we have dealt only with those influences that react at present, and will

react in the future, towards the triumph of the Scientist or job-hunter. Fortunately there are contrary influences at work that come to the assistance of the intellectual dilettante and the Greats man.

These contrary influences are nothing more than three traditions; but the vested interests behind them are strong enough to make them a very considerable factor in the future of the University. I shall deal with them in the reverse order of their importance.

The first is nothing more than the tradition of that much maligned body, the Civil Service. Ever since Dickens and Trollope, it has been the butt of every simple satirist of English literature. Yet if ever the Civil Service deserved a word of praise, it is at the present stage in this essay. The Diplomatic Service, the Home Services, the Indian and the Colonial Services, all retain with great tenacity the Oxford tradition of the past. Oddly enough it serves them well; but that is incidental. The men in these Services at present are men who have been

nourished on the classical culture, and the intending Civil Servant is encouraged by the examination by which he is selected, to choose one of the Older Schools to read at Oxford.

The Civil Service, and others have noted it before me, is harder to move out of its groove than any other work of man. Successive governments have tried to leave their impress on it in minor matters and each in turn has been compelled to confess, at least tacitly, its failure. But the old Oxford tradition of the Civil Service is no minor matter; the powers that be, were brought up on it, and the powers that are about to be, are being brought up on it. Remembering the tremendous inertia of the Government Services, it is not probable that the future will see any radical change in that tradition.

The legal profession too, apparently more by accident than by design, encourages its candidates to read one of the older Schools at Oxford. An Oxford degree is an undoubted asset to a barrister

or a solicitor; but, by some fortunate chance, the legal profession has refused to recognize that a degree in Law is any more valuable than a degree in Greats. Indeed by some the degree in Law is actually frowned upon, so that the future barrister enters upon his three or four years at Oxford in the knowledge that he is not undergoing a direct training for his future at the bar, and he is thus saved the necessity of transforming himself, while still at the University, into a mass-produced legal automaton.

These two traditions of the Civil Service and the legal professions, deep-rooted as they are, assure at the moment, and in the future will probably still assure, a steady flow of candidates for the older Schools. But this steady minimum would not be sufficient to enable the Old Culture to hold its own against the new, if it were not for another and equally strong tradition in the University itself.

Each Sunday at the service in the University Church, is said a prayer for the peace of the souls of the Pious

Benefactors of the University of Oxford; and that prayer might well be changed into a pæan of thanksgiving on behalf of the vested interests of classical learning.

The vast majority of the endowments of the University and Colleges, dating back as they do, to the thirteenth century onwards, are devoted by the will of their founders to the study of the Older Schools. Nearly ninety per cent. of the fellowships are for the benefit of teachers of the ancient culture; and, as a result, the academic tradition of the dons is thrown with all its weight into the right side of the balance. There is at present no Scientist as head of a college. To the best of my knowledge all the senior tutors of colleges are Classical Fellows. In every Senior Common Room representatives of the Older School predominate and, since the election of new Fellows depends upon the decision of the Senior Common Room, the majority of the younger Fellows are men of the same type and the same tradition as their seniors. Only in those specific cases where a science

don is being elected does the product of the newer type of education stand a chance; and while the endowments for the Classics outnumber those for Science this state of affairs will only very slowly change. And, after all, the influence of the senior members of the University is a much more permanent thing than that of the undergraduate. An undergraduate generation is a fleeting thing; three years, or at the most four, and it is past and forgotten; while a generation of dons may, and very frequently does, so healthy is a life of academic ease, surpass fifty years in its duration.

But our pious benefactors went further in their posthumous influence in favour of the Older Schools. Appreciating that a University of teachers was useless without some pupils, they left money, for the foundation, not only of Fellowships, but also of scholarships for students of the classical culture.

Fully three-quarters of the ancient endowment of scholarships, is, by the

terms of the bequest, set aside for candidates who intend to study in the Older Schools. This is a factor that does much to offset the fall in the economic conditions of the professional classes; for by the system of award of Open Scholarships by definite scholarship examinations, the candidates are judged, not as State Scholars, on their unenterprising industry and the excellence of their memories, but on their promise, and the evidence that they can show of independent thinking. In this way the impoverished professional classes have at least an exiguous entrance into that University from which the rising cost of academic life would otherwise preclude them; and it is this not inconsiderable number of classical scholars, sprung in the vast majority of cases from the cultured classes, that forms the outstanding men in that intellectual life of the University, that we reviewed earlier in this volume.

There must be accounted then to the credit balance of the Older Schools, the vast bulk of the academic tradition of

the University among both its senior and its junior members.

There is left for examination the third great tradition that reacts in favour of the older culture. It is the vested interest of wealth in sending recruits to the University. Some half a hundred pages back, I referred to the intellectually poor—the non-thinking man—as the suspenders by which the University may escape out of the whale of commercialism, and I implored you not to forget the suspenders. In the subsequent discussion, you had forgotten them, but now they are coming in again to play their part.

There has been for many centuries now, a tradition by which the sons of the 'possessing' classes are sent to Oxford to complete their education. That is, in fact, the foundation of the class-conscious criticism of the University at the present day. The tradition still exists with almost undiminished strength. As one class of Possessors becomes impoverished, another takes over the

tradition. The landowner's son may emigrate to America to become a farmer, the moment that he leaves school; but in his stead the American's son is sent to Oxford. The sons of the professional classes may be set to earn their livings at the age of seventeen, but their place is filled by the sons of the commercial magnates; and Oxford still remains to a certain extent the playground of wealthy youth, while the vested interest in favour of its continuing to be so, is extremely strong.

Now, when a young man is sent to Oxford to spend time and money, not with the intention of turning his learning to immediate commercial account, but rather to obtain the cachet of the Oxford Manner, there is no *a priori* reason why he should chose a Science School to read. Indeed, as has already been pointed out, all the ancient academic tradition of the senior members tends to place him in one of the Older Schools. In a great many cases, he follows the line of least resistance, and, on the

recommendation of the dons, direct or only implied, he enrols himself among the recruits to the older culture.

This reacts in two different ways, but both directed to the same end. In the first place he keeps the Older Schools in their majority of membership, and thus throws the balance over on their side in opposition to the Scientists; and in the second place, though perhaps in eighty per cent. of the cases he can be classed among the non-thinking men, who play no part in the intellectual life of the University; in the other twenty per cent. the curriculum of his School, with its opportunity for intellectual leisure, and the companionship of his fellow students of the same subject, exert their dual influence upon him and he becomes enrolled in the ranks of the open-minded enquirers after knowledge. And with each of his reactions to the life of the University the older Schools gain the benefit.

That is why you must, on no account, forget the suspenders.

THE FUTURE OF OXFORD

We are now approaching the last lap of this forecast—an estimate of the University of the future. Before we reach that it would perhaps be as well to summarize what has gone before.

We have surveyed the intellectual life of the University, taking as the field of its most significant manifestations, the Union, the University Newspapers, the Intellectual Clubs, and the Social Life—in fact, those parts of academic life where the undergraduate is on his own initiative, and where there is most chance of assessing the lines on which he thinks.

We have found in that survey that the chief feature of the Intellectual Life among the undergraduates is a spirit of open-minded enquiry into subjects as deep and as diverse as life itself; and we have accepted that spirit as the Ideal for the University.

The line of demarcation comes between those who follow that Ideal, who correspond roughly with those who are reading the Older Schools, Greats, Modern Greats, History, English, and Law; and those

who are more occupied with obtaining a sound mass-produced specialized education that will fit them for an immediate post in the commercial world, and who correspond roughly with those who are reading the Modern Schools, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Medicine and the Modern Languages.

The struggle in the future thus devolves into the competition between the Older and the Modern Schools for the adherence of the future generation of undergraduates; and with the success or failure of the Older Schools in that struggle the old conception of the University, as a centre of culture instead of a technical school-cum-research-station, stands or falls.

On the side of the Modern Schools stand arrayed the forces of the women, limited by statute, the growth of the State Scholarship system, the growth of scientific commercialism, and the economic decline of the professional classes.

On the side of the Older Schools stand the three great traditions of ancient Oxford—the tradition of the Civil Service

and the legal profession, the Old Academic tradition of the University, and the tradition of the wealthy classes that gives them a vested interest in the University as a playground for their sons.

At present the balance hangs well over on the side of the Older Schools, and Oxford still remains a centre of the Old Culture. But the forces that keep it there are only *dead* forces—the three traditions; and those traditions are not growing with the passing of the years. On the other side there are the *living* forces, and, except for the women who, at the moment are limited arbitrarily by statute, they are forces that grow in strength each year.

In the future the balance may be very close. It will only need a very little thing to throw the scale over in either direction. But that little thing exists. It is . . . Cambridge.

The number of vacancies at Oxford and Cambridge are limited, and, putting aside the present eclipse of Oxford athletics, there is, to the impartial

observer, not a pin to chose between them. Therein lies the salvation of Oxford as the home of the traditional culture.

For those vacancies in the older universities there are the two rival candidates —the students of the Older Schools and the students of the Modern Schools. To these latter at least, it is in the main a matter of indifference which of the Older Universities they attend, and their choice will be largely dictated by the manner in which each of those Universities caters for their needs.

In Cambridge, as far as I can judge from my half-dozen visits to it, there is the same rivalry between the old and the new being fought out. But Cambridge from the point of view of the older culture, labours under a disadvantage greater than her sister Oxford. The academic tradition of Cambridge is less firmly rooted in the classics. Compared with Oxford she has always been considered as the home of Science. As a result, the new benefactions to the cause of Science in the Older Universities show an

increasing tendency to be diverted to Cambridge, and her Science Schools are more up-to-date, and rapidly growing very much more up-to-date than the corresponding Schools at Oxford.

The result of this is that more and more of the representatives of the modern culture are streaming to the University on the Cam; and on their heels are streaming more and more benefactions and endowments to the Science Schools there.

The process, fortunately, from an Oxonian point of view, is cumulative. The more scientists, the more new endowments; the more new endowments, the more scientists. There is no reason why it should cease. The forces that react towards the modern culture are growing forces, the traditions that support the old, were always weaker than at Oxford, and are remaining static and thus weaker in comparison with the new.

As the new tradition at Cambridge grows stronger, and the old less strong, at the same time the reverse effect must

be taking place at Oxford. The number of vacancies for the students of the old and the new Schools remains approximately the same. The deciding factor as to which type shall go to which University, will be the facilities which each University provides for the rival types.

Thus the tendency will be for the scientists to be diverted in ever-increasing numbers to the Cam, and the Greats man to be perforce driven in less swiftly increasing numbers to the Isis. *Cambridge will become the home of the new culture: Oxford will remain the last citadel of the old.*

Make me dictator of Oxford for a day and I could bring about this change between sunrise and sunset. At the head of the Old Guard—the Greats men, the Modern Greats men, the Historians, Lawyers, and the English students, I should advance upon the Parks. The flames from the laboratories would be watched by awe-struck villagers on Hinksey Hill until, of those temples of

commercial culture, not one stone was left upon another. Thence our fanatic steps would turn northwards. The affrighted amazons of Lady Margaret Hall would outstrip their sister of St Hugh's in their race for the sanctuary of the Up Platform of the Great Western Station. Our good work done, we should return down St Giles for our most tragic task. Pausing only for a moment at the Taylorian Institution to build a holocaust of the Modern Language Library we should stand in the stern-faced groups beneath the lamp-posts of St Giles. Over each of them would be slung a stout hempen rope and noose. At the appointed signal, the executioner beneath each post would haul upon his rope, and in a trice the corpses of the Science Dons and Benefactors would be left swaying gently in the breeze, while a confused rabble of Science Students flee terror-stricken down the road to Cambridge.

"*L'Université n'a pas besoin des savants.*"

But no one will allow me to be dictator of Oxford for a day, and the Oxford of next year will be the Oxford of this year. I must wait until the process that I have outlined in this essay will perform my task less swiftly but no less surely; and Cambridge, by the inexorable law of progress, will remove our incubus of Scientists, while Oxford, by the inexorable law of Oxford, will remain, as through ten centuries she has remained, a citadel of the ancient culture.

Half-a-century ahead, when the choice comes to me to send my grandchildren to the technical-school-cum-research-station that will be Cambridge, or to the University that will still be Oxford; there will be no hesitation in my decision.

If this book sells well, and I can still afford to let them 'waste', as it will still be called, three precious years of their young lives; they too shall be sons of my alma mater. And on the first day of their first vacation, we shall sit around the fire when the evening light has gone and they will tell me that young Oxford

is thinking and speculating on life, art, and immortality, much as young Oxford thought and speculated fifty years before. And I, listening and rather silent, as befits old age, will murmur softly: "*Et ego in Arcadia.*"

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