

VOL. LXXXII, No. 2

JUNE, 1911

PRICE, 35 CENTS

THE CENTURY ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY MAGAZINE



THE CENTURY CO-UNION SQUARE-NEW YORK

FRANK H. SCOTT, PRESIDENT. WILLIAM W. ELLSWORTH, SECRETARY AND TREASURER. DONALD SCOTT, ASSISTANT TREASURER. UNION SQUARE, NEW YORK
Copyright, 1911, by The Century Co.] (Trade-Mark Registered Oct. 18, 1831.) [Entered at N. Y. Post Office as Second Class Mail Matter

Digitized by Google

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXXII

JUNE, 1911

No. 2

THE COMMERCIAL STRENGTH OF GREAT BRITAIN

("THE TRADE OF THE WORLD" PAPERS)

BY JAMES DAVENPORT WHELPLEY

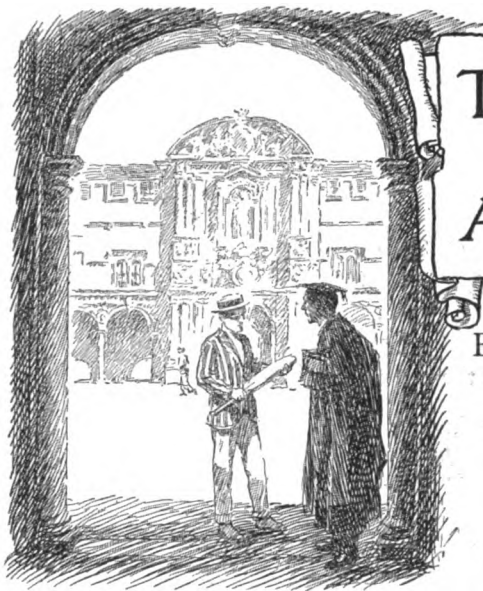
WITH PICTURES BY JOSEPH PENNELL

NOT very long ago I sat in the private office of the head of a great English company, chatting with the executive chief of the concern. The office was more like the library of a magnificent private residence than a place of business. It was very large, and furnished in rather somber but most pleasant fashion; soft rugs covered the polished floors, beautiful old mahogany bookshelves and cabinets lined the walls, while here and there an engraving of a good picture served to relieve the eye. In the center of the room at a big, flat-top desk of English make sat a man well on in years, and of the kind described as "an example of the best type of the old school business man," shrewd, but kindly, gentle in manner, sure of ground already trodden, and fearsome of new adventure. The concern of which he was the head was possessed of enormous capital, an amount which would command respect even in Wall Street. The business was the manu-

facture of certain railway appliances now used in every country of the globe with one curious exception, the United States, a country which beyond doubt offers the largest and most profitable field for their exploitation. In response to my natural inquiry as to why this should be so the director said:

"I am personally responsible, I might say, for the fact that our company is not doing business in the United States. To tell you the truth, I am afraid of you Americans. I was in New York some years ago and the memory of that visit is almost a nightmare. To be frank, you Americans terrify me. I am deafened, swept away, feel utterly helpless in your hands. We are doing very well as it is, here and in other parts of the world, and while I know the United States is probably the greatest field we could enter for business, well, we just have n't done it, that's all." After some further talk he

Copyright, 1911, by THE CENTURY CO. All rights reserved.



THE FLAVOR OF LIFE AT OXFORD

BY TERTIUS VAN DYKE

WITH PICTURES BY FRED. PEGRAM

"And now I take leave of Oxford without even an attempt to describe it."

HAWTHORNE ("Our Old Home").

AN American student who works for two or three years at Oxford may mark the progress of his education by his passage beyond the point where a description of the old university seemed easy, to a point where it seems almost impossible. The flavor of life at Oxford is what the American remembers most intimately when his degree is taken and the gate of his gray old English college closes behind him. And that is what I should like to suggest in this sketch.

When you first come as a student to Oxford, you are entirely at the mercy of your esthetic sensibilities. You wonder if you can ever stop gazing. As you stroll through the college gardens and walks or up the long, graceful curve of the High and lift your eyes to that airy creation of stone, the steeple of St. Mary, you will indeed be a man of hardened sensibilities if your whole mind is not occupied in deciding whether you will become an architect, a landscape-gardener, or a painter. But finally you turn your attention to learning something about that college in which you are enrolled. You receive various instructions, go through the ceremony of matriculation, and receive the large volume entitled "*Statua et Decreta Univer-*

sitatis Oxoniensis," full of difficult Latin phrases and with every rule amended. You are informed how many times your college expects you to attend chapel, and how many times you must dine in the college Hall. You are instructed not to walk in the streets after dark without the cap and gown that designates you an undergraduate, and you are strictly ordered to be inside your lodgings or inside your college gates by midnight. Various other rules are heaped upon you till you wonder vaguely whether you ought to ask the gate-porter's permission to go out to buy a note-book. For breaches of all these rules there are penalties ranging all the way from small fines to being "sent down," or expelled from college.

Thus life looks serious enough from the official point of view, but you will soon discover that the undergraduate has a point of view of his own. The proctors and their assistants, appropriately known as "bulldogs," roam the streets at night on the lookout for the wily undergraduate. But the wily undergraduate, deeming it rather a point of honor not to wear the required cap and gown, is also on the lookout for the proctors. It is a solemn affair to be "progged." Perhaps you come suddenly around a corner face to face with a bulldog. "The proctor would like to speak to you," he remarks, and you step up to a tall figure arrayed in a black robe and mortar-board and standing in the shadow. Solemnly he takes off his hat and says, "Good evening"; to which you reply as best you may. "Are you a member of this university?" he inquires. You acquiesce, and he demands your name and

college, which information he notes down while requesting you to visit him at his office the next morning. "Good evening," again, and you depart, somewhat crestfallen. The next morning you appear before the tribunal and punishment is meted

are available at all times, but they are chiefly used in the warm spring nights when the misty moonlight lures even the most law-abiding undergraduate out to walk in the country or to punt along the Cher or the Isis. Report has it that the



Drawn by Fred. Pegram

"PROGGED"

out to you according to the heinousness of your transgression.

It will not take you long to discover that there are other ways into college than the gate by which stands the porter's lodge with the ever watchful Cerberus on guard. There is a hole in the wall, or the drooping branches of a friendly tree, or an iron-work gate the design in which is admirably adapted to the needs of an agile climber. Needless to say these entrances

athletic dean of a certain college was strolling in one of the quadrangles one misty spring night, when he observed two dusky figures scaling the gate. After watching their clumsy efforts some moments, he stepped forward, and as they tumbled inside the sacred precincts of the law, climbed easily over the gate and back, remarking, "If you have got to do it, at least do it the right way."

Your first acquaintance with the Oxford

undergraduate will probably be disappointing. You will consider him taciturn, even moody. He seems to regard you with a somewhat critical eye. He has heard so much about American versatility that he is inclined to distrust you, like the man in the fable who could blow hot and cold with the same breath. As one don expressed it to me, "We English and you Americans are such close relations that we are sure to disagree over small things." The English undergraduate marvels impassionately at your strange vagaries of speech. He is willing to believe almost anything about the strange continent across the seas. As a rule you will find him well-read in some one subject at least. He is used to taking examinations. Perhaps at the age of twelve he wins a scholarship at Eton, and later enters an Oxford college as a scholar, and finally enters the Civil Service—all by means of competitive examinations.

The bond of fellowship existing among men who enter and depart from an American university together is lacking in Oxford. Perhaps you will know more men who are "going up for schools" at the same time as yourself, but that is due to the common interests of your work. The class spirit so dear to the heart of the American college man has given place under the system of Oxford to the spirit of the colleges. Each college, with its slightly different customs and habits, has a character of its own. Often a certain type of undergraduate predominates in a certain college, but usually there are many kinds together. Sometimes there are factions and internecine war which come to the outrageous and ignominious ending of some one spluttering in the water on a dark night.

Within Oxford itself there exists every type of undergraduate: the rowing man, the riding man, the foot-ball devotee, the politician, the book-worm, the scholar, the loafer, and every shade between. The average undergraduate gives himself strongly to some form of athletics. Rowing is the chief interest, for the season begins with the opening of the colleges and closes with Eights' Week in May, and even after that many college crews continue practising for the Henley Regatta. In midwinter come the races of the college "Torpids," more familiarly known as "Toggers." These

Toggers consist of a coxswain and a crew of eight men, rowing in a boat with fixed seats. Sometimes in January or February the practice of these oarsmen is stopped by the freezing of the river. But the Oxford athlete is not inclined to heed the weather. You will find him swinging cheerily away at his oar in pouring, freezing rain, or chasing the slippery foot-ball through several inches of mud. If you learn nothing else at Oxford, you learn that unfavorable weather conditions are not real preventatives.

Moored to the bank of the Thames along the bottom of Christ Church meadows lie the college barges, the headquarters for the oarsmen. Along the opposite bank runs the tow-path, a scene of indescribable excitement on rowing days when frenzied undergraduates dash madly along it beside their college boats. And when the race is over, how the whole tow-path gasps for breath. The runners are almost as tired as the rowers, who hang heaving over their oars under the shadow of Folly Bridge. Then the college ferries with their long punt poles cross to the tow-path to carry the runners back, and the oarsmen, having regained their breath, paddle their shells slowly to the barges.

Some sunny afternoon in winter perhaps you will stroll down the tow-path toward Iffley, to watch the crews practise. There you will see the coaches running or riding a bicycle along the bank and shouting orders in no uncertain words or tones. Suddenly you will hear a long drawn shout: "Look ahead, sir, 'Varsity." This is a moment of supreme trepidation for the coxswain of a Togger. A few hasty orders and he has his boat resting as close to the bank as possible, while the 'Varsity boat, running easily between strokes, sweeps by and the coaches mounted on horses clatter along the tow-path. All eyes in the Togger are glued on the passing boat, and many a heart beats quicker with the hope that some day it may be a part of that rhythmical, magical unity of bodies and oars and boat. But the waiting coxswain breathes a sigh of relief, for it is a finable offense to hold up the 'Varsity boat, not to mention the blow to one's budding reputation.

Every afternoon the streets of Oxford swarm with bareheaded undergraduates in



Drawn by Fred. Pegram

"THE COACHES MOUNTED ON HORSES CLATTER ALONG THE TOW-PATH"

"shorts" or "flannels," bicycling to their various college athletic fields. Several hours later you will see them returning splashed with mud and eager for a bath and the inevitable cup of tea. But not all undergraduates spend their afternoons on

the athletic fields. There are always a number clad in flannel "bags" and tweed coat (the habitual Oxford uniform) who walk out in friendly groups into the neighboring country to visit the pretty villages on the hills around Oxford. Perhaps they

will visit Marston with its memories of Cromwell and his Invincibles, or Cumnor Church with its quaint statue of Queen Elizabeth, or the hill where Shelley used to dream, or the haunts of the Scholar Gipsy where the pale fritillaries still bloom in early spring.

If you stop in at the Union Society any afternoon, especially about tea-time, you will find the embryo politicians. Some are writing letters in the pleasant writing-room; some are ransacking the useful library for material for Thursday evening debates; others are perusing extensive files of newspapers, or discussing the budget with a confidence that might be envied by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Here are men who will eagerly inform you how many Prime Ministers obtained their first training at the Union. Nor must the older members of the society (no longer undergraduates) be overlooked, especially that portly person who, while industriously reading one newspaper, is at the same time quietly sitting on several others.

The book-shops which abound in Oxford largely take the place of libraries. Here books of all kinds are available from the numerous cheap but excellent editions to large hand-tooled morocco bindings. If you step into one of these book-shops at any time of day, you will find men looking at books. Here undergraduate and professor meet on the ground of common interest and equal footing, and often you will see them in a quiet corner discussing various new publications.

To take life easy, which is familiarly known in Oxford as "slacking," is one of those virtues so subtle that it borders upon vice. At the right time there is nothing more delightful and profitable, but as a continuous habit of mind there is nothing more demoralizing. There is no doubt that the spring term is the season when the slacker is most in evidence. There is still plenty of tennis and cricket, and training for May Eights is in full swing, but every pleasant afternoon the Cher and Isis swarm with punts and canoes. Men lie at their ease on comfortable cushions while others only less idle than they wield the pole or paddle. Boatloads of girl students from the various Halls swing by with oars bristling out at every angle. In the delicate green shade under the willow-trees boats are moored and idlers deceiv-

ing themselves (but nobody else) with open books make obvious pretense of study. Punting in these long flat-bottomed punts is not as simple as it looks. When the punt reaches the narrowest part of the stream and several boats are passing, it invariably conceives an irresistible desire to go sidewise. A moment later all the boats concerned are in collision, and every one is laughing good-naturedly. Perhaps you are hastening to reach a favorite part of the river before opening your luncheon basket. There is a sharp snap as your pole breaks under the strain, and as you come to the surface again and strike out for your punt you imagine yourself surrounded by boats filled with demons grinning sardonically at your discomfiture. A little later perhaps your wounded pride is salved by the sight of a wretched man clinging to the top of an upright pole and settling slowly but surely into the river.

If you are wise you will spend an afternoon in early spring on the Cher. The river is still high along its banks and the overhanging willow-trees are misty in the distance. The air is still too sharp for loitering in the pleasant summer fashion, but this is the time of year when you shall meet pleasant surprises at every turn of the winding stream. One day last spring a friend and I were gliding softly along in that delightfully adventurous frame of mind that can only be described as the expectation of the unexpected. Suddenly there was a splashing of water mingled with inarticulate cries, and a great white creature hurtled through the water in our direction. When we recovered our composure after a hasty flight and reconnoitered the position from a safe distance, we observed his serene gracefulness the white swan floating placidly on the water but casting an indignant eye toward our harmless canoe. On the green point of an island not far away we saw the victim of our innocent intrusion. The mate of his serene gracefulness was sitting on her nest and watching with some trepidation the outcome of this episode.

Later in the spring, when the passing of boats was a frequent occurrence, the swans grew accustomed to the disturbance, and although a watchful bird usually floated on the water between the boat and the brooding mate, there was no fear of an attack. When the pink and white haw-

thorns were in full bloom along the banks, one of the pleasantest sights of the river was to see the two stately swans paddling easily up the current while seven fluffy cygnets with bright black eyes scuttled anxiously along between them. There are

delicate cuckoo-flower along the banks, or heard the rapturous skylark above the sunny meadows; you must have read your favorite book of poetry and mused quietly in the contemplation of beauty.

Life inside an Oxford college is full of



Drawn by Fred. Pegram

"BAREHEADED UNDERGRADUATES IN 'SHORTS' OR 'FLANNELS,'
BICYCLING TO THEIR VARIOUS COLLEGE
ATHLETIC FIELDS"

many thousands of these beautiful birds living on the Thames and its tributaries. As of old, they are still owned by the Crown and the ancient companies of dyers and vintners. Every August "swan-up-pings" are held, and the young birds are caught and marked with the sign of ownership on the upper mandible.

But it is impossible to describe the charm of Oxford waterways. To appreciate their fascination you must have seen the first

interest and occasionally of noise. There are nights when all the undergraduates assemble to celebrate some athletic victory. Perhaps your college has won some races on the Isis. There is a dinner in the college that night with a few guests from other colleges. Wine is supplied from the college cellars. There are speeches and plenty of laughter, and finally a bonfire at which every one dances hilariously around the quadrangle. Fireworks are let off.

Some daring spirit leaps across the bonfire, others follow. Long lines of joyful undergraduates waltz around the college cloisters. Some Scotchman appears blowing the bagpipes. As if moved by one impulse, the college falls solemnly into line and marches after him till some new thing takes their fancy and they scatter all through the quadrangles. At last weariness and sleep fall upon the rioters and the bonfire smolders into ashes in the darkened quadrangle, while the gargoyles no doubt discuss the antics of undergraduate life from an experience of several hundred years.

As soon as you arrive at college you will learn the importance of the "scout" or servant who is to guard your physical well-being. If he lights your study fire only on warm mornings, or neglects to keep your cupboard filled as you have told him, or upsets the ink all over your table, you may settle down to a life of misery. But usually he is satisfactory and even invaluable. Often he has little idiosyncrasies just like the dons whom he tries to imitate. Sometimes he becomes possessed with the idea that your life needs reforming, and as you look over your letters you will find a tract concealed among them. Occasionally he is gifted with a conscience that would do credit to a saint. Like the don the scout is in the continuous line of college tradition, for while undergraduates come and undergraduates go, he abides through many generations, and sometimes (alas, for paternal dignity!) will inform you of certain enlightening episodes of previous years.

How deeply the love of sports is inbred in the Englishman is apparent from his term of approval. If you take your luck as it comes, following hard after your purpose regardless of details, you will be known as a "sportsman." The typical Oxford riding undergraduate is not much of a student. He is often in hot water with his college dons. It is on such occasions as the yearly college "grinds" that his qualities come out. Here are gathered undergraduate riders and spectators from several colleges, as well as farmers and country folk from the neighborhood. The ground is often slippery with thick Oxfordshire mud. But the races are not lacking in dash. Here the field sweeps up a gentle incline to a low jump at the top.

Perhaps they are all well over, but the ground on the other side falls sharply away. Horses are on their knees and riders sprawl in the mud. But the horses are caught and the riders mount and scurry away after the leaders. Sometimes the winner himself is besmeared with the tell-tale marks.

After you have seen the Oxford undergraduate under all these varied circumstances of his life, working, exercising his delight in sports, or idling, you will indeed be a strange man if you are not irresistibly attracted toward your cousin. Disagreeable men are here as well as elsewhere, and of snobbish men more than a fair proportion. But if one of your acquaintances cuts you dead in the college quadrangle, there is not sufficient reason to set him down as a snob. Often it is due to shyness. But sometimes there is no mistake of his intention and all your democratic blood rushes to your face as you realize the full force of Tennyson's lines:

Gorgonized me from head to foot
With a stony British stare.

The Oxford undergraduate is less effusive than the American. Fight through a Princeton Freshman-Sophomore rush, and if you are laid up with a black eye or a twisted muscle, you will find classmates, total strangers to you, shouting up at your windows the next morning to wish you quick recovery. At Oxford the undergraduate makes acquaintances and friends more slowly. But for all his quietness and caution he is none the less a good fellow, and, once your friend, he stands by you with the stanchness of your real American college friends.

One of the first persons you meet on coming to an Oxford college is your tutor. As an American at Oxford you are presumed to be in serious pursuit of wisdom. Hence you must take an Honor School. Let us suppose that you are to try for the B.A. degree, and have passed the first set of examinations. You now come to the final stage of your journey toward the degree and your work is concentrated in one general field. Perhaps it is that famous Oxford school of *Litteræ Humaniores* (familiarily known as "Greats") in which you study ancient history, philosophy, Greek, and Latin. A certain number of

examination papers will be set, the general scope of which is defined. Your tutor's object is to prepare you for these examinations, for on the examinations alone does your degree depend. Whether or not you shall attend many lectures is a matter of private settlement between you and your college, or rather between you and your

His chief faults are two. He is sometimes hasty in his judgment of your powers, and having made up his mind (for example) that you have only the ability to take a fourth class in the examinations, he occasionally neglects you for your more brilliant fellow-student. His second fault is more serious and fortunately is rare.



Drawn by Fred. Pegram

"OBVIOUS PRETENSE OF STUDY"

tutor. Work is adjusted to individual needs. If you learn more from lectures than in a library, your tutor will ask you to attend many lectures. But attendance at lectures is rarely marked, and there is no fixed number of classes to be attended each week. Your tutor will advise you to read certain books, he will ask you to write essays on various topics, and he will call upon you to test your knowledge by taking trial examinations.

Sometimes an undergraduate finds himself working with a tutor who, although a good scholar, is certainly not a good teacher. A man who has a large fund of information on a certain subject is not necessarily a teacher; and sometimes a man with less information than he is more able to inspire enthusiasm in students and accomplish the desired results.

Thus it is apparent how much depends individually on the tutor and the student.

A bad tutor handicaps an undergraduate just as a bad pupil handicaps a tutor. The best Oxford tutors are men whom it is a real privilege to know and work with. They are full of quiet but contagious enthusiasm and eager to impart their interests to the sincere student. Under the Oxford system the student who is graduate with a high rank has a real mastery of his subject, but more important still, he has a mind capable of thinking for itself.

Into this varied and charming life of Oxford more than a hundred Americans are privileged to enter each year. Most of these are Rhodes Scholars,¹ but there are always others, both men and women. I am not unaware of several violent arraignments of Rhodes Scholars which have lately appeared in the newspapers. These attacks have just enough truth to make them deceptive. Incidents are cited in which Rhodes Scholars have failed to perform their trust; but the evil of these articles is that they present such events as if they were of constant occurrence. The result is that while the incidents may be true individually, yet when they are thus grouped together the reader who does not know the other side of the picture obtains a totally false impression. It is not to be expected that all the American Rhodes Scholars should be successful. But taking them as a whole, I believe it would be difficult to find among a body of equal size so many efficient, observant, and interesting men. Many of them play prominent parts in the interests of the university. Last year an American for the first time played on the 'Varsity Rugby team, and another was president of the O. U. A. A. (which is the office corresponding to an American track-team captaincy). Others were active in debating at the Union. Also the famous Vinerian Law Fellowship was won by an American.

But all the elements of success are not to be judged by the outward signs. You must know the Rhodes Scholar (like any other man) before you can express an opinion about him.

The American Club is a place for the dissemination of American news. Here debates on American affairs are held on Saturday evenings. Nor is the lighter side of life neglected; for a serious evening often breaks up with ragtime on the long-

suffering piano, or an old song. Each year the club arranges a Thanksgiving service, which is conducted by some American minister. In the evening comes a banquet followed by speeches. This last Thanksgiving two of the Americans' greatest friends, Sir James Murray and Professor Walter Raleigh, were the English guests and speakers at the banquet. When Colonel Roosevelt came to Oxford to lecture he was the guest of the club at luncheon. On alternate years the Colonial Club and the American Club entertain each other at an informal reception. The purpose of the American Club, in brief, is to increase the interests of Americans at Oxford, especially in affairs concerning their own country.

From the American students' point of view one of the attractions in going to Oxford is the opportunity afforded for travel. During the six weeks' vacation at Christmas and again at Easter, and the three months in summer, the Americans scatter wherever their inclinations and purses will permit. You will find them in big cities and little villages, in Scotland, in Turkey, in Spain—anywhere. You will meet a familiar figure on the snowy peak of a Swiss mountain or in the Roman Forum; for the American at Oxford is not less fond of travel than other Americans, and often some of his pleasantest memories are of vacations spent with friends in many a strange part of the world.

But not all vacations are spent in travel. According to the Oxford system much of a man's work must be done in vacation. So groups of men depart with boxes of books to some pleasant place in the country in England, or perhaps France, or Germany, to work and enjoy themselves in company. Others will go to London or Paris to work in the libraries there. Sometimes a man does his only serious work on one of these reading-parties. I remember a man in Oxford who, as his examinations approached and he found failure staring him in the face, persuaded his college to let him retire from Oxford to the country during term time in order that he might be quiet and study.

Every Sunday afternoon in Oxford term time you may see undergraduates hastening toward North Oxford, where lies the

¹ The Rhodes Scholars number about ninety.

chief residential portion of the city. Here kindly hostesses dispense hospitality and the customary cup of tea to their friends and acquaintances. Here are delightful gardens bright with flowers and shady lawns dotted with shrubbery. In the winter you will be received by the fire, but in summer you may find the household gods temporarily set up in the garden. Often you will meet interesting people of all kinds, not the least interesting of whom is the Oxford professor himself.

Many Americans at Oxford will not easily forget the warm welcome that always awaited them in a certain large family where learning and playing were so inextricably confused that each profited by the other; nor the kind American lady whose small parlor was continually full of callers and who stood always ready to play mother to any American who wanted her. Aside from the residents of Oxford there are often American teachers and visitors working in the great libraries or merely spending a few months of leisure in the fascinating city. The college authorities too are most hospitable. You may break bread with many of them before your course is ended. Nor must I forget the kindly president of a certain college who was himself an oarsman as well as a scholar in his undergraduate days, and who never passes by the achievement of any member of his college without a written or, at least, spoken word of approval.

Such, in brief, is the situation in which the American student at Oxford finds himself. He has the inestimable privilege of being at one of the world centers of learning and culture. Surrounded by antiquity, he treads on historic ground at every step, while the beauties of nature and those made by man constantly remind him that

Oxford is old-fashioned in the finest sense of that word. Tradition and custom are everywhere. The university is conservative to the core. Masses of dead rules remain on the books, but despite this the university continues to turn out good men, and that is its primary object. Each college has its own special traditions and customs. At Magdalen College one of the most beautiful customs comes at dawn on May-day when the college choir sings a Latin hymn on top of the bell tower. Almost every day in the calendar has its special associations, and past and present events are so pleasantly commingled in one's mind that time comes to have a new and richer significance. One of the pleasantest things about my sojourn at Oxford is that many of the happiest memories are of days in the ordinary routine of life, in the college quadrangle, or the lecture halls, or over a friend's fire of a wintry evening. After all, it is the true test of a place if it can charm in those hours when the current of life flows so evenly that the unobservant are fain to call it monotonous.

The United States is a distinct nation, but its relation with Great Britain is as vital as ever it was. And in nothing is this relationship more vital than in matters of intellect. The American universities are especially adapted to the needs of American undergraduates and it would be a misfortune for a man to miss his opportunities there. But to the graduate of an American college, a man who has some knowledge of American ideals, Oxford offers innumerable benefits. It is an enlightening and inspiring experience to dwell within the walls of this most ancient of all English universities, nor need you return any the less a true American because of your admiration for England and the Englishmen.

A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

