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Содержание

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PREFACE

These papers do not profess even to sketch the outlines of a history of Oxford. They are merely records of the impressions made by this or that aspect of the life of the University as it has been in different ages. Oxford is not an easy place to design in black and white, with the pen or the etcher's needle. On a wild winter or late autumn day (such as Father Faber has made permanent in a beautiful poem) the sunshine fleets along the plain, revealing towers, and floods, and trees, in a gleam of watery light, and leaving them once more in shadow. The melancholy mist creeps over the city, the damp soaks into the heart of everything, and such suicidal weather ensues as has been described, once for all, by the author of *John-a-Dreams*. How different Oxford looks when the road to Cowley Marsh is dumb with dust, when the heat seems almost tropical, and by the drowsy banks of the Cherwell you might almost expect some shy southern water-beast to come crashing through the reeds! And such a day, again, is unlike the bright weather of late September, when all the gold and scarlet of Bagley Wood are concentrated in the leaves that cover the walls of Magdalen with an imperial

vesture.

Our memories of Oxford, if we have long made her a Castle of Indolence, vary no less than do the shifting aspects of her scenery. Days of spring and of mere pleasure in existence have alternated with days of gloom and loneliness, of melancholy, of resignation. Our mental pictures of the place are tinged by many moods, as the landscape is beheld in shower and sunshine, in frost, and in the colourless drizzling weather. Oxford, that once seemed a pleasant porch and entrance into life, may become a dingy ante-room, where we kick our heels with other weary, waiting people. At last, if men linger there too late, Oxford grows a prison, and it is the final condition of the loiterer to take 'this for a hermitage.' It is well to leave the enchantress betimes, and to carry away few but kind recollections. If there be any who think and speak ungently of their *Alma Mater*, it is because they have outstayed their natural 'welcome while,' or because they have resisted her genial influence in youth.

CHAPTER I
THE TOWN BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY

Most old towns are like palimpsests, parchments which have been scrawled over again and again by their successive owners. Oxford, though not one of the most ancient of English cities, shows, more legibly than the rest, the handwriting, as it were, of many generations. The convenient site among the interlacing waters of the Isis and the Cherwell has commended itself to men in one age after another. Each generation has used it for its own purpose: for war, for trade, for learning, for religion; and war, trade, religion, and learning have left on Oxford their peculiar marks. No set of its occupants, before the last two centuries began, was very eager to deface or destroy the buildings of its predecessors. Old things were turned to new uses, or altered to suit new tastes; they were not overthrown and carted away. Thus, in walking through Oxford, you see everywhere, in colleges, chapels, and churches, doors and windows which have been builded up; or again, openings which have been cut where none originally existed. The upper part of the round Norman arches in the Cathedral has been preserved, and converted into the circular bull's-eye lights which the last century liked. It is the same everywhere, except where modern restorers have had

their way. Thus the life of England, for some eight centuries, may be traced in the buildings of Oxford. Nay, if we are convinced by some antiquaries, the eastern end of the High Street contains even earlier scratches on this palimpsest of Oxford; the rude marks of savages who scooped out their damp nests, and raised their low walls in the gravel, on the spot where the new schools are to stand. Here half-naked men may have trapped the beaver in the Cherwell, and hither they may have brought home the boars which they slew in the trackless woods of Headington and Bagley. It is with the life of historical Oxford, however, and not with these fancies, that we are concerned, though these papers have no pretension to be a history of Oxford. A series of pictures of men's life here is all they try to sketch.

It is hard, though not impossible, to form a picture in the mind of Oxford as she was when she is first spoken of by history. What she may have been when legend only knows her; when St. Frideswyde built a home for religious maidens; when she fled from King Algar and hid among the swine, and after a whole fairy tale of adventures died in great sanctity, we cannot even guess. This legend of St. Frideswyde, and of her foundation, the germ of the Cathedral and of Christ Church, is not, indeed, without its value and significance for those who care for Oxford. This home of religion and of learning was a home of religion from the beginning, and her later life is but a return, after centuries of war and trade, to her earliest purpose. What manner of village of wooden houses may have surrounded the earliest rude chapels

and places of prayer, we cannot readily guess, but imagination may look back on Oxford as she was when the *English Chronicle* first mentions her. Even then it is not unnatural to think Oxford might well have been a city of peace. She lies in the very centre of England, and the Northmen, as they marched inland, burning church and cloister, must have wandered long before they came to Oxford. On the other hand, the military importance of the site must have made it a town that would be eagerly contended for. Any places of strength in Oxford would command the roads leading to the north and west, and the secure, raised paths that ran through the flooded fens to the ford or bridge, if bridge there then was, between Godstowe and the later Norman *grand pont*, where Folly Bridge now spans the Isis. Somewhere near Oxford, the roads that ran towards Banbury and the north, or towards Bristol and the west, would be obliged to cross the river. The water-way, too, and the paths by the Thames' side, were commanded by Oxford. The Danes, as they followed up the course of the Thames from London, would be drawn thither, sooner or later, and would covet a place which is surrounded by half a dozen deep natural moats. Lastly, Oxford lay in the centre of England indeed, but on the very marches of Mercia and Wessex. A border town of natural strength and of commanding situation, she can have been no mean or poor collection of villages in the days when she is first spoken of, when Eadward the Elder 'incorporated with his own kingdom the whole Mercian lands on both sides of Watling Street' (Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, vol. i. p. 57),

and took possession of London and of Oxford as the two most important parts of a scientific frontier. If any man had stood, in the days of Eadward, on the hill that was not yet 'Shotover,' and had looked along the plain to the place where the grey spires of Oxford are clustered now, as it were in a purple cup of the low hills, he would have seen little but 'the smoke floating up through the oakwood and the coppice,'

> Καπνὸν δ' ἐνὶ γέσσῃ
> ἕδρακον ὀφθαλμοῖσι διὰ δρυμὰ πυκνὰ καὶ ὕλην

The low hills were not yet cleared, nor the fens and the wolds trimmed and enclosed. Centuries later, when the early students came, they had to ride 'through the thick forest and across the moor, to the East Gate of the city' (*Munimenta Academica*, Oxon., vol. i. p. 60). In the midst of a country still wild, Oxford was already no mean city; but the place where the hostile races of the land met to settle their differences, to feast together and forget their wrongs over the mead and ale, or to devise treacherous murder, and close the banquet with fire and sword.

Again and again, after Eadward the Elder took Mercia, the Danes went about burning and wasting England. The wooden towns were flaming through the night, and sending up a thick smoke through the day, from Thamesmouth to Cambridge. 'And next was there no headman that force would gather, and each fled as swift as he might, and soon was there no shire that would help

another.' When the first fury of the plundering invaders was over, when the Northmen had begun to wish to settle and till the land and have some measure of peace, the early meetings between them and the English rulers were held in the border-town, in Oxford. Thus Sigeferth and Morkere, sons of Earngrim, came to see Eadric in Oxford, and there were slain at a banquet, while their followers perished in the attempt to avenge them. 'Into the tower of St. Frideswyde they were driven, and as men could not drive them thence, the tower was fired, and they perished in the burning.' So says William of Malmesbury, who, so many years later, read the story, as he says, in the records of the Church of St. Frideswyde. There is another version of the story in the *Codex Diplomaticus* (DCCIX.). Aethelred is made to say, in a deed of grant of lands to St. Frideswyde's Church ('mine own minster'), that the Danes were slain in the massacre of St. Brice. On that day Aethelred, 'by the advice of his satraps, determined to destroy the tares among the wheat, the Danes in England.' Certain of these fled into the minster, as into a fortress, and therefore it was burned and the books and monuments destroyed. For this cause Aethelred gives lands to the minster, 'fro Charwell brigge andlong the streame, fro Merewell to Rugslawe, fro the lawe to the foule putte,' and so forth. It is pleasant to see how old are the familiar names 'Cherwell,' 'Hedington,' 'Couelee' or Cowley, where the college cricket-grounds are. Three years passed, and the headmen of the English and of the Danes met at Oxford again, and more peacefully, and agreed to live together,

obedient to the laws of Eadgar; to the law, that is, as it was administered in older days, that seem happier and better ruled to men looking back on them from an age of confusion and bloodshed. At Oxford, too, met the peaceful gathering of 1035, when Danish and English claims were in some sort reconciled, and at Oxford Harold Harefoot, the son of Cnut, died in March 1040. The place indeed was fatal to kings, for St. Frideswyde, in her anger against King Algar, left her curse on it. Just as the old Irish kings were forbidden by their customs to do this or that, to cross a certain moor on May morning, or to listen to the winnowing of the night-fowl's wings in the dusk above the lake of Tara; so the kings of England shunned to enter Oxford, and to come within the walls of Frideswyde the maiden. Harold died there, as we have seen, but there he was not buried. His body was laid at Westminster, where it could not rest, for his enemies dug it up, and cast it forth upon the fens, or threw it into the river. Many years later, when Henry III. entered Oxford, not without fear, the curse of Frideswyde lighted also upon him. He came in 1263, with Edward the prince, and misfortune fell upon him, so that his barons defeated and took him prisoner at the battle of Lewes. The chronicler of Oseney Abbey mentions his contempt of superstitions, and how he alone of English kings entered the city: '*Quod nullus rex attemptavit a tempore Regis Algari*,' an error, for Harold *attemptavit*, and died. When Edward I. was king, he was less audacious than his father, and in 1275 he rode up to the East Gate and turned his horse's head about, and sought a

lodging outside the town, *reflexis habenis equitans extra moenia aulam regiain in suburbio positam introivit*. In 1280, however, he seems to have plucked up courage and attended a Chapter of Dominicans in Oxford.

The last of the meetings between North and South was held at Oxford in October 1065. '*In urle quæ famoso nomine Oxnaford nuncupatur*,' to quote a document of Cnut's. (*Cod. Dipl.* DCCXLVI. in 1042.) There the Northumbrian rebels met Harold in the last days of Edward the Confessor. With this meeting we leave that Oxford before the Conquest, of which possibly not one stone, or one rafter, remains. We look back through eight hundred years on a city, rich enough, it seems, and powerful, and we see the narrow streets full of armed bands of men – men that wear the cognisance of the horse or of the raven, that carry short swords, and are quick to draw them; men that dress in short kirtles of a bright colour, scarlet or blue; that wear axes slung on their backs, and adorn their bare necks and arms with collars and bracelets of gold. We see them meeting to discuss laws and frontiers, and feasting late when business is done, and chaffering for knives with ivory handles, for arrows, and saddles, and wadmal, in the booths of the citizens. Through the mist of time this picture of ancient Oxford may be distinguished. We are tempted to think of a low, grey twilight above that wet land suddenly lit up with fire; of the tall towers of St. Frideswyde's Minster flaring like a torch athwart the night; of poplars waving in the same wind that drives the vapour and

smoke of the holy place down on the Danes who have taken refuge there, and there stand at bay against the English and the people of the town. The material Oxford of our times is not more unlike the Oxford of low wooden booths and houses, and of wooden spires and towers, than the life led in its streets was unlike the academic life of to-day. The Conquest brought no more quiet times, but the whole city was wrecked, stormed, and devastated, before the second period of its history began, before it was the seat of a Norman stronghold, and one of the links of the chain by which England was bound. 'Four hundred and seventy-eight houses were so ruined as to be unable to pay taxes,' while, 'within the town or without the wall, there were but two hundred and forty-three houses which did yield tribute.'

With the buildings of Robert D'Oily, a follower of the Conqueror's, and the husband of an English wife, the heiress of Wigod of Wallingford, the new Oxford begins. Robert's work may be divided roughly into two classes. First, there are the strong places he erected to secure his possessions, and, second, the sacred places he erected to secure the pardon of Heaven for his robberies. Of the castle, and its 'shining coronal of towers,' only one tower remains. From the vast strength of this picturesque edifice, with the natural moat flowing at its feet, we may guess what the castle must have been in the early days of the Conquest, and during the wars of Stephen and Matilda. We may guess, too, that the burghers of Oxford, and the rustics of the neighbourhood, had no easy life in those days, when, as we

have seen, the town was ruined, and when, as the extraordinary thickness of the walls of its remaining tower demonstrates, the castle was built by new lords who did not spare the forced labour of the vanquished. The strength of the position of the castle is best estimated after viewing the surrounding country from the top of the tower. Through the more modern embrasures, or over the low wall round the summit, you look up and down the valley of the Thames, and gaze deep into the folds of the hills. The prospect is pleasant enough, on an autumn morning, with the domes and spires of modern Oxford breaking, like islands, through the sea of mist that sweeps above the roofs of the good town. In the old times, no movement of the people who had their fastnesses in the fens, no approach of an army from any direction could have evaded the watchman. The towers guarded the fords and the bridge and were themselves almost impregnable, except when a hard winter made the Thames, the Cherwell, and the many deep and treacherous streams passable, as happened when Matilda was beleaguered in Oxford. This natural strength of the site is demonstrated by the vast mound within the castle walls, which tradition calls the Jews' Mound, but which is probably earlier than the Norman buildings. Some other race had chosen the castle site for its fortress in times of which we know nothing. Meanwhile, some of the practical citizens of Oxford wish to level the Jews' Mound, and to 'utilise' the gravel of which it is largely composed. There is nothing to be said against this economic project which could interest or affect the persons who entertain

it. M. Brunet-Debaines' illustration shows the mill on a site which must be as old as the tower. Did the citizens bring their corn to be tolled and ground at the lord's mill?

Though Robert was bent on works of war, he had a nature inclined to piety, and, his piety beginning at home, he founded the church of St. George within the castle. The crypt of the church still remains, and is not without interest for persons who like to trace the changing fortunes of old buildings. The site of Robert's Castle is at present occupied by the County Gaol. When you have inspected the tower (which does not do service as a dungeon) you are taken, by the courtesy of the Governor, to the crypt, and satisfy your archæological curiosity. The place is much lower, and worse lighted, than the contemporary crypt of St. Peter's-in-the-East, but not, perhaps, less interesting. The square-headed capitals have not been touched, like some of those in St. Peter's, by a later chisel. The place is dank and earthy, but otherwise much as Robert D'Oily left it. There is an odd-looking arrangement of planks on the floor. It is *the new drop*, which is found to work very well, and gives satisfaction to the persons who have to employ it. Sinister the Norman castle was in its beginning, 'it was from the castle that men did wrong to the poor around them; it was from the castle that they bade defiance to the king, who, stranger and tyrant as he might be, was still a protector against smaller tyrants.' Sinister the castle remains; you enter it through ironed and bolted doors, you note the prisoners at their dreary exercises, and, when you have seen the engines

of the law lying in the old crypt you pass out into the place of execution. Here, in a corner made by Robert's tower and by the wall of the prison, is a dank little quadrangle. The ground is of the yellow clay and gravel which floors most Oxford quadrangles. A few letters are scratched on the soft stone of the wall – the letters 'H. R.' are the freshest. These are the initials of the last man who suffered death in this corner – a young rustic who had murdered his sweetheart. 'H. R.' on the prison wall is all his record, and his body lies under your feet, and the feet of the men who are to die here in after days pass over his tomb. It is thus that malefactors are buried, 'within the walls of the gaol.'

One is glad enough to leave the remains of Robert's place of arms – as glad as Matilda may have been when 'they let her down at night from the tower with ropes, and she stole out, and went on foot to Wallingford.' Robert seems at first to have made the natural use of his strength. 'Rich he was, and spared not rich or poor, to take their livelihood away, and to lay up treasures for himself.' He stole the lands of the monks of Abingdon, but of what service were moats, and walls, and dungeons, and instruments of torture, against the powers that side with monks?

The *Chronicle of Abingdon* has a very diverting account of Robert's punishment and conversion. 'He filched a certain field without the walls of Oxford that of right belonged to the monastery, and gave it over to the soldiers in the castle. For which loss the brethren were greatly grieved – the brethren of Abingdon. Therefore, they gathered in a body before the altar

of St. Michael – the very altar that St. Dunstan the archbishop dedicated – and cast themselves weeping on the ground, accusing Robert D'Oily, and praying that his robbery of the monastery might be avenged, or that he might be led to make atonement.' So, in a dream, Robert saw himself taken before Our Lady by two brethren of Abingdon, and thence carried into the very meadow he had coveted, where 'most nasty little boys,' *turpissimi pueri*, worked their will on him. Thereon Robert was terrified and cried out, and wakened his wife, who took advantage of his fears, and compelled him to make restitution to the brethren.

After this vision, Robert gave himself up to pampering the monastery and performing other good works. He it was who built a bridge over the Isis, and he restored the many ruined parish churches in Oxford – churches which, perhaps, he and his men had helped to ruin. The tower of St. Michael's, in 'the Corn,' is said to be of his building; perhaps he only 'restored' it, for it is in the true primitive style – gaunt, unadorned, with round-headed windows, good for shooting from with the bow. St. Michael's was not only a church, but a watchtower of the city wall; and here the old northgate, called Bocardo, spanned the street. The rooms above the gate were used till within quite recent times, and the poor inmates used to let down a greasy old hat from the window in front of the passers-by, and cry, 'Pity the Bocardo birds':

> 'Pigons qui sont en l'essoine,
> Enserrez soubz trappe volière,'

as a famous Paris student, François Villon, would have called them. Of Bocardo no trace remains, but St. Michael's is likely to last as long as any edifice in Oxford. Our illustrations represent it as it was in the last century. The houses huddle up to the church, and hide the lines of the tower. Now it stands out clear, less picturesque than it was in the time of Bocardo prison. Within the last two years the windows have been cleared, and the curious and most archaic pillars, shaped like balustrades, may be examined. It is worth while to climb the tower and remember the times when arrows were sent like hail from the narrow windows on the foes who approached Oxford from the north, while prayers for their confusion were read in the church below.

That old Oxford of war was also a trading town. Nothing more than the fact that it was a favourite seat of the Jews is needed to prove its commercial prosperity. The Jews, however, demand a longer notice in connection with the still unborn University. Meanwhile, it may be remarked that Oxford trade made good use of the river. The *Abingdon Chronicle* (ii. 129) tells us that 'from each barque of Oxford city, which makes the passage by the river Thames past Abingdon, a hundred herrings must yearly be paid to the cellarer. The citizens had much litigation about land and houses with the abbey, and one Roger Maledoctus (perhaps a very early sample of the pass-man) gave Abingdon tenements within the city.' Thus we leave the pre-Academic Oxford a flourishing town, with merchants and moneylenders.

As for the religious, the brethren of St. Frideswyde had lived but loosely (*pro libito viverunt*), says William of Malmesbury, and were to be superseded by regular canons, under the headship of one Guimond, and the patronage of the Bishop of Salisbury. Whoever goes into Christ Church new buildings from the river-side, will see, in the old edifice facing him, a certain bulging in the wall. That is the mark of the pulpit, whence a brother used to read aloud to the brethren in the refectory of St. Frideswyde. The new leaven of learning was soon to ferment in an easy Oxford, where men lived *pro libito*, under good lords, the D'Oilys, who loved the English, and built, not churches and bridges only, but the great and famous Oseney Abbey, beyond the church of St. Thomas, and not very far from the modern station of the Great Western Railway. Yet even after public teaching in Oxford certainly began, after Master Robert Puleyn lectured in divinity there (1133; cf. *Oseney Chronicle*), the tower was burned down by Stephen's soldiery in 1141 (*Oseney Chronicle*, p. 24).

CHAPTER II
THE EARLY STUDENTS – A DAY WITH A MEDIEVAL UNDERGRADUATE

Oxford, some one says, 'is bitterly historical.' It is difficult to escape the fanaticism of Antony Wood, and of 'our antiquary,' Bryan Twyne, when one deals with the obscure past of the University. Indeed, it is impossible to understand the strange blending of new and old at Oxford – the old names with the new meanings – if we avert our eyes from what is 'bitterly historical.' For example, there is in most, perhaps in all, colleges a custom called 'collections.' On the last days of term undergraduates are called into the Hall, where the Master and the Dean of the Chapel sit in solemn state. Examination papers are set, but no one heeds them very much. The real ordeal is the awful interview with the Master and the Dean. The former regards you with the eyes of a judge, while the Dean says, 'Master, I am pleased to say that Mr. Brown's *papers* are very fair, very fair. But in the matters of *chapels* and of *catechetics*, Mr. Brown sets – for a *scholar*– a very bad example to the other undergraduates. He has only once attended divine service on Sunday morning, and on that occasion, Master, his dress consisted exclusively of a long

great-coat and a pair of boots.' After this accusation the Master will turn to the culprit and observe, with emphasis ill represented by italics, 'Mr. Brown, the *College* cannot hear with pleasure of such behaviour on the part of a *scholar*. You are *gated*, Mr. Brown, for the first fortnight of next term.' Now why should this tribunal of the Master and the Dean, and this dread examination, be called collections? Because (*Munimenta Academica*, Oxon., i. 129) in 1331 a statute was passed to the effect that 'every scholar shall pay at least twelve pence a-year for lectures in logic, and for physics eighteenpence a-year,' and that 'all Masters of Arts except persons of royal or noble family, shall be obliged to *collect* their salary from the scholars.' This *collection* would be made at the end of term; and the name survives, attached to the solemn day of doom we have described, though the college dues are now collected by the bursar at the beginning of each term.

By this trivial example the perversions of old customs at Oxford are illustrated. To appreciate the life of the place, then, we must glance for a moment at the growth of the University. As to its origin, we know absolutely nothing. That Master Puleyn began to lecture there in 1133 we have seen, and it is not likely that he would have chosen Oxford if Oxford had possessed no schools. About these schools, however, we have no information. They may have grown up out of the seminary which, perhaps, was connected with St. Frideswyde's, just as Paris University may have had some connection with 'the School of the Palace.' Certainly to Paris University the academic corporation

of Oxford, the *Universitas*, owed many of her regulations; while, again, the founder of the college system, Walter de Merton (who visited Paris in company with Henry III.), may have compared ideas with Robert de Sorbonne, the founder of the college of that name. In the early Oxford, however, of the twelfth and most of the thirteenth centuries, colleges with their statutes were unknown. The University was the only corporation of the learned, and she struggled into existence after hard fights with the town, the Jews, the Friars, the Papal courts. The history of the University begins with the thirteenth century. She may be said to have come into being as soon as she possessed common funds and rents, as soon as fines were assigned, or benefactions contributed to the maintenance of scholars. Now the first recorded fine is the payment of fifty-two shillings by the townsmen of Oxford as part of the compensation for the hanging of certain clerks. In the year 1214 the Papal Legate, in a letter to his 'beloved sons in Christ, the burgesses of Oxford,' bade them excuse the 'scholars studying in Oxford' half the rent of their halls, or hospitia, for the space of ten years. The burghers were also to do penance, and to feast the poorer students once a year; but the important point is, that they had to pay that large yearly fine 'propter suspendium clericorum' – all for the hanging of the clerks. Twenty-six years after this decision of the Legate, Robert Grossteste, the great Bishop of Lincoln, organised the payment and distribution of the fine, and founded the first of the *chests*, the chest of St. Frideswyde. These *chests* were a kind of

Mont de Piété, and to found them was at first the favourite form of benefaction. Money was left in this or that *chest*, from which students and masters would borrow, on the security of pledges, which were generally books, cups, daggers, and so forth.

Now, in this affair of 1214 we have a strange passage of history, which happily illustrates the growth of the University. The beginning of the whole affair was the quarrel with the town, which, in 1209, had hanged two clerks, 'in contempt of clerical liberty.' The matter was taken up by the Legate – in those bad years of King John the Pope's viceroy in England – and out of the humiliation of the town the University gained money, privileges, and halls at low rental. These were precisely the things that the University wanted. About these matters there was a constant strife, in which the Kings, as a rule, took part with the University. The University possessed the legal knowledge, which the monarchs liked to have on their side, and was therefore favoured by them. Thus, in 1231 (Wood, *Annals*, i. 205), 'the King sent out his Breve to the Mayor and Burghers commanding them not to overrate their houses'; and thus gradually the University got the command of the police, obtained privileges which enslaved the city, and became masters where they had once been despised, starveling scholars. The process was always the same. On the feast of St. Scholastica, for example, in 1354, Walter de Springheuse, Roger de Chesterfield, and other clerks, swaggered into the Swyndlestock tavern in Carfax, began to speak ill of John de Croydon's wine, and ended by pitching the

tankard at the head of that vintner. In ten minutes the town bell at St. Martin's was rung, and the most terrible of all Town-and-Gown rows began. The Chancellor could do no less than bid St. Mary's bell reply to St. Martin's, and shooting commenced. The Gown held their own very well at first, and 'defended themselves till Vespertide,' when the citizens called in their neighbours, the rustics of Cowley, Headington, and Hincksey. The results have been precisely described in anticipation by Homer:

> τόφρα δ' ἄρ οἰχόμενοι Κίκονες Κικόνεσσι γεγώνευν
> οἳ σφῖν γείτονες ἦσαν ἅμα πλέονες καὶ ἀρείους
>
> •••
>
> ἦμος δ' Ηέλιος μετενίσσετο βουλυτόνδε
> καὶ τότε δὴ Κίκονες κλῖναν δαμάσαντες 'Αχαιούς.

Which is as much as to say, 'The townsfolk call for help to their neighbours, the yokels, that were more numerous than they, and better men in battle.. so when the sun turned to the time of the loosing of oxen the Town drave in the ranks of the Gown, and won the victory.' They were strong, the townsmen, but not merciful. 'The crowns of some chaplains, viz. all the skin so far as the tonsure went, these diabolical imps flayed off in scorn of their clergy,' and 'some poor innocents these confounded sons

of Satan knocked down, beat, and most cruelly wounded.' The result, in the long run, was that the University received from Edward III. 'a most large charter, containing many liberties, some that they had before, and *others that he had taken away from the town*.' Thus Edward granted to the University 'the custody of the assize of bread, wine, and ale,' the supervising of measures and weights, the sole power of clearing the streets of the town and suburbs. Moreover, the Mayor and the chief Burghers were condemned yearly to a sort of public penance and humiliation on St. Scholastica's Day. Thus, by the middle of the fourteenth century, the strife of Town and Gown had ended in the complete victory of the latter.

Though the University owed its success to its clerkly character, and though the Legate backed it with all the power of Rome, yet the scholars were Englishmen and Liberals first, Catholics next. Thus they had all English sympathy with them when they quarrelled with the Legate in 1238, and shot his cook (who, indeed, had thrown hot broth at them); and thus, in later days, the undergraduates were with Simon de Montfort against King Henry, and aided the barons with a useful body of archers. The University, too, constantly withstood the Friars, who had settled in Oxford on pretence of wishing to convert the Jews, and had attempted to get education into their hands. 'The Preaching Friars, who had lately obtained from the Pope divers privileges, particularly an exemption, as they pretended, from being subject to the jurisdiction of the University, began to behave themselves

very insolent against the Chancellors and Masters.' (Wood, *Annals*, i. 399.) The conduct of the Friars caused endless appeals to Rome, and in this matter, too, Oxford was stoutly national, and resisted the Pope, as it had, on occasions, defied the King. The King's Jews, too, the University kept in pretty good order, and when, in 1268, a certain Hebrew snatched the crucifix from the hand of the Chancellor and trod it under foot, his tribesmen were compelled to raise 'a fair and stately cross of marble, very curiously wrought,' on the scene of the sacrilege.

The growth in power and importance of academic corporations having now been sketched, let us try to see what the outer aspect of the town was like in these rude times, and what manner of life the undergraduates led. For this purpose we may be allowed to draw a rude, but not unfaithful, picture of a day in a student's life. No incident will be introduced for which there is not authority, in Wood, or in Mr. Anstey's invaluable documents, the *Munimenta Academica*, published in the collection of the Master of the Rolls. Some latitude as to dates must be allowed, it is true, and we are not of course to suppose that any one day of life was ever so gloriously crowded as that of our undergraduate.

The time is the end of the fourteenth century. The forest and the moor stretch to the east gate of the city. Magdalen bridge is not yet built, nor of course the tower of Magdalen, which M. Brunet-Debaines has sketched from Christ Church walks. Not till about 1473 was the tower built, and years would pass after that before choristers saluted with their fresh voices from

its battlements the dawn of the first of May, or sermons were preached from the beautiful stone pulpit in the open air. When our undergraduate, Walter de Stoke, or, more briefly, Stoke, was at Oxford, the spires of the city were few. Where Magdalen stands now, the old Hospital of St. John then stood – a foundation of Henry III. – but the Jews were no longer allowed to bury their dead in the close, which is now the 'Physic Garden.' 'In 1289,' as Wood says, 'the Jews were banished from England for various enormities and crimes committed by them.' The Great and Little Jewries – those dim, populous streets behind the modern Post Office – had been sacked and gutted. No clerk would ever again risk his soul for a fair Jewess's sake, nor lose his life for his love at the hands of that eminent theologian, Fulke de Breauté. The beautiful tower of Merton was still almost fresh, and the spires of St. Mary's, of old All Saints, of St. Frideswyde, and the strong tower of New College on the city wall, were the most prominent features in a bird's-eye view of the town. But though part of Merton, certainly the chapel tower as we have seen, the odd muniment-room with the steep stone roof, and, perhaps, the Library, existed; though New was built; and though Balliol and University owned some halls, on, or near, the site of the present colleges, Oxford was still an university of poor scholars, who lived in town's-people's dwellings.

Thus, in the great quarrel with the Legate in 1238, John Currey, of Scotland, boarded with Will Maynard, while Hugh le Verner abode in the house of Osmund the Miller, with Raynold

the Irishman and seven of his fellows. John Mortimer and Rob Norensis lodged with Augustine Gosse, and Adam de Wolton lodged in Cat Street, where you can still see the curious arched doorway of Catte's, or St. Catherine's Hall. By the time of my hero, Walter Stoke, the King had not yet decreed that all scholars of years of discretion should live in the house of some sufficient principal (1421); so let him lodge at Catte Hall, at the corner of the street that leads to New College out of the modern Broad Street, which was then the City Ditch. It is six o'clock on a summer morning, and the bells waken Stoke, who is sleeping on a flock bed, in his little *camera*. His room, though he is not one of the luxurious clerks whom the University scolds in various statutes, is pretty well furnished. His bed alone is worth not less than fifteenpence; he has a 'cofer' valued at twopence (we have plenty of those old valuations), and in his cofer are his black coat, which no one would think dear at fourpence, his tunic, cheap at tenpence, 'a roll of the seven Psalms,' and twelve books only 'at his beddes heed.' Stoke has not

> 'Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
> Of Aristotil and of his philosophie,'

like Chaucer's Undergraduate, who must have been a bibliophile. There are not many records of 'as many as twenty bookes' in the old valuations. The great ornament of the room is a neat trophy of buckler, bow, arrows, and two daggers, all

hanging conveniently on the wall. Stoke opens his eyes, yawns, looks round for his clothes, and sees, with no surprise, that his laundress has not sent home his clean linen. No; Christina, of the parish of St. Martin, who used to be Stoke's *lotrix*, has been detected at last. 'Under pretence of washing for scholars, *multa mala perpetrata fuerunt*,' she has committed all manner of crimes, and is now in the Spinning House, *carcerata fuit*. Stoke wastes a malediction on the laundress, and, dressing as well as he may, runs down to Parson's Pleasure, I hope, and has a swim, for I find no tub in his room, or, indeed, in the *camera* of any other scholar. It is now time to go, not to chapel – for Catte's has no chapel – but to parish Church, and Stoke goes very devoutly to St. Peter's, where we shall find him again, later in the day, in another mood. About eight o'clock he 'commonises' with a Paris man, Henricus de Bourges, who has an admirable mode of cooking omelettes, which makes his company much sought after at breakfast-time. The University, in old times, was full of French students, as Paris was thronged by Englishmen. Lectures begin at nine, and first there is lecture in the hall by the principal of Catte's. That scholar receives his pupils in a bare room, where it is very doubtful whether the students are allowed to sit down. From the curious old seal of the University of St. Andrews, however, it appears that the luxury of forms was permitted, in Scotland, to all but the servitors, who held the lecturer's candles. The principal of Catte's is in academic dress, and wears a black cape, boots, and a hood. The undergraduates have no distinguishing costume.

After an hour or two of *vivâ voce* exercises in the grammar of Priscian, preparatory lecture is over, and a reading man will hurry off to the 'schools,' a set of low-roofed buildings between St. Mary's and Brasenose. There he will find the Divinity 'school' or lecture-room in the place of honour, with Medicine on one hand and Law on the other; the lecture-rooms for grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy, for metaphysics, ethics, and 'the tongues,' stretching down School Street on either side. Here the Prælectors are holding forth, and all newly made Masters of Arts are bound to teach their subject *regere scholas*, whether they like it or not. Our friend, Master Stoke, however, is on pleasure bent, and means to pay his fine of twopence for omitting lecture, and go off to the festival of his *nation* (he is of the Southern nation, and hates Scotch, Welsh, and Irish) in the parish Church. He stops in the Flower Market and at a barber's shop on his way to St. Peter's, and comes forth a wonderful pagan figure with a Bacchic mask covering his honest countenance, with horns protruding through a wig of tow, with vine-leaves twisted in and out of the horns, and roses stuck wherever there is room for roses. Henricus de Bourges, and half a dozen Picardy men, with some merry souls from the Southern side of the Thames, are jigging down the High, playing bag-pipes and guitars. To these Stoke joins himself, and they waltz joyously into the church, and in and out of the gateways of the different halls, singing, —

'Mihi est propositum in taberna mori,
Vinum sit appositum morientis ori,
Ut dicant, quum venerint, angelorum chori
Deus sit propitius huic potatori.'

The students of the Northern nations mock, of course, at these revellers, thumbs are bitten, threats exchanged, and we shall see what comes of the quarrel. But the hall bells chime half-past noon; it is dinner-time in Oxford, and Stoke, as he throws off his mask (*larva*) and vine-leaves, mutters to himself the equivalent for 'there *will* be a row about this.' There will, indeed, for the penalty is not 'crossing at the buttery,' nor 'gating,' but – excommunication! (*Munim. Academ.*, i. 18.) Dinner is not a very quiet affair, for the Catte's men have had to fight for their beer in the public streets with some Canterbury College fellows who were set on by their Warden, of all people, to commit this violence (*ut vi et violentia raperent cerevisiam aliorum scholarum in vico*): however, Catte's has had the best of it, and there is beer in plenty. It is possible, however, that fish is scarce, for certain 'forestallers' (*regratarii*) have been buying up salmon and soles, and refusing to sell them at less than double the proper price. On the whole, however, there a rude abundance of meat and bread; indeed, Stoke may have fared better in Catte's than the modern undergraduate does in the hall of the college protected by St. Catherine. After dinner there would be lecture in Lent, but we are not in Lent. A young man's fancy lightly turns to the Beaumont, north of the modern Beaumont Street, where

there are wide playing-fields, and space for archery, foot-ball, stool-ball, and other sports. Stoke rushes out of hall, and runs upstairs into the *camera* of Roger de Freshfield, a reading man, but a good fellow. He knocks and enters, and finds Freshfield over his favourite work, the *Posterior Analytics*, and a pottle of strawberries. 'Come down to the Beaumont, old man,' he says, 'and play pyked staffe.' Roger is disinclined to move, he *must* finish the *Posterior Analytics*. Stoke lounges about, in the eternal fashion of undergraduates after luncheon, and picking up the *Philobiblon* of Richard de Bury (then quite a new book), clinches his argument in favour of pyke and staffe with a quotation: 'You will perhaps see a stiff-necked youth lounging sluggishly in his study.. He is not ashamed to eat fruit and cheese over an open book, and to transfer his cup from side to side upon it.' Thus addressed, Roger lays aside his *Analytics*, and the pair walk down by Balliol, to the Beaumont, where pyked staffe, or sword and buckler, is played. At the Beaumont they find two men who say that 'sword and buckler can be played sofft and ffayre,' that is, without hard hitting, and with one of these Stoke begins to fence. Alas! a dispute arose about a stroke, the by-standers interfered, and Stoke's opponent drew his hanger (*extraxit cultellum vocatum hangere*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.