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REMINISCENCES OF OXFORD IN THE EARLY "NINETIES."

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Forty years on, when afar and asunder
Parted are those who are singing to-day,
When you look back, and forgetfully wonder
What you were like in your work and your play.

SO we used to sing at Balliol, and it comes as a shock to realize that it is just forty years since I went up to Oxford with an Exhibition from Trent College. The words quoted are from "The Harrow Football Song," which has been appropriated by Balliol, probably since Mr. John Farmer, who composed the well-known tune, moved on as Organist from the School to the College, which claims to be the second oldest in the University. "Come to Balliol, Mr. Farmer, and we will build you an organ." This, according to tradition, was Jowett's invitation. Already "the Master" has been mentioned. How could it be otherwise in notes written by one of those who sat at his feet? The memorial to him in the College Chapel has inscribed on it only the name "Jowett"—"*verbum non amplius*," and this is fitting. To all who studied under him his will always be "*clarum et venerabile nomen*." "*Immanis pecoris custos, immanior ipse*"! Many would say that "*domus Balliolensis*" owes its peculiar reputation to him, but there were Greeks before Agamemnon, and he only carried on the work of his distinguished predecessors, Parsons, Jenkyns, and Scott. At his death in 1893 it was said that "Balliolism pervaded the University," and at that time eight heads of other Colleges were Balliol men. In other ways his direct personal influence outside his own College in his later years was probably not great, though the vigour with which he once discharged the office of Vice-Chancellor was not forgotten. His reputation as a theologian was ephemeral, and at Cambridge it is reported that they said, "Oxford suffered under the disadvantage of having a Regius Professor of Greek who did not know the difference between the Greek particles," a remark which may be taken as illustrating the difference which, broadly speaking, exists between Oxford and Cambridge ideals of scholarship. This difference was noted by the late Dr. Sanday in an article in *The Expositor* soon after the publication of the Revised New Testament. He observed that "as Cambridge had a large preponderance of members on the New Testament Company (thirteen as against five of Oxford), the Revised Version leaned more to the side of exact literalism than of polished style."

Here it may not be amiss to observe that Jowett's aim in his strict supervision of both tutors and students was not to produce

men remarkable for their erudition, but rather such as would be "good all round" (as I once heard Horace's phrase "*teres et rotundus*" delightfully translated), useful members of society in whatever environment they might be placed. One hopes that the sentiment attributed to the late Lord Oxford (one of Jowett's pupils) is fictitious, though the sentence has a distinctly Asquithian ring, that the chief characteristic of Balliol men is "a tranquil consciousness of effortless superiority." It has been said with equal truth (or falsehood) that the difference between the typical Cambridge and the typical Oxford man is that "the Cambridge man looks as if the whole world belonged to him, and the Oxford man as if he did not care whether it did or not."

Jowett's appearance was striking. He had a countenance suggestive of one of Reynolds' cherubs, and a wide forehead crowned with beautiful white hair. He habitually wore, even in the daytime, a "swallow-tail" coat with low waist-coat and white tie. But if his dress recalled the days past there was nothing old-fashioned in his speech. Most of the stories with which the world has been bored about him are doubtless apocryphal, but he had cultivated the habit of saying caustic things in an epigrammatic manner, as when he informed one of my own acquaintances at the terminal "Hand-shaking," "Your mediocrity is not golden, but leaden." More trying to some was his "*terribile silentium*," which a former public orator, Dr. Merry, the Rector of Lincoln College, recalled to memory in his Latin speech at the "Encœnia" in 1894.

There was, however, a side to his awe-inspiring personality not always suspected. Bishop Chavasse liked to recall a day during his time at St. Peter-le-Bailey when to his surprise "The Master of Balliol" was announced. Jowett called on that occasion to enlist the Rector's sympathy on behalf of a College Scout who was ill, and to promise such material help as might be needed. Just after I had come through Classical "Mods," "Death's bright angel" entered my home in the midlands of Ireland. My father's health had been failing for some time, and my mother was prostrate with grief. Other members of the family were obliged to return to posts of duty, and under the circumstances I plucked up courage to write to the Master, who was a rigid disciplinarian, to ask permission to stay at home for a term. Early in the day on which he received my letter he replied by wire, "Yes, if you think it best." The implied trust in an obscure member of the College may help to explain his success in dealing with young men. The College discipline was the strictest in Oxford, and as regards attendance in Chapel a high example was set by its Head, who never, unless prevented by illness or a call of duty elsewhere, failed to be in his seat twice a day. On Sundays he always "celebrated" at the 8 o'clock Communion Service, but as a rule preached only twice a term. His sermons, delivered in a voice of bell-like tone, were written in the choicest English, and are delightful to read as specimens of a chaste prose style, but they certainly did not conform to any recognized standard of orthodoxy. He sometimes expressed himself rather

quaintly, perhaps from a lack of a sense of humour. Thus in a sermon on "I have been young and now am old," etc., when summing up the feelings with which one "who had spent fifty years in this place" would look back upon his early years, he caused some amusement by the remark, "He would think that the Providence which looks after little children and drunken people had taken special care of him." He always used the Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday before preaching, and at the end of his days, when his heart manifestly went out in fatherly love to the College he had served so well, always pronounced a double benediction at the end of the Service,—"The Lord bless you and keep you . . ."; "The peace of God . . ."

Some of his *obiter dicta* are worth recalling. "Read Pope and Dryden," he said to some of us who had been reading essays to him, "they will do you more good than anything that is written in these days"; "Mr. Browning was the only learned English poet, except perhaps Gray." His opinion of Browning's place among the poets was, "I think he deserves a shady First." I once heard him refer to a change which he had noticed in the style of sermons preached in Scotland (referring, I think, to the Presbyterian Church). He said that though in his young days they were perhaps long and dry, they contained definite doctrine; "but now they are always about the character of Jeroboam, or something of that sort, and I do not think it is an improvement." He expressed his approval of the opinion shyly hazarded by one of his class that the object of a sermon should be to present Christ to the congregation.

One evening when he had invited me to join him at dessert (an honour which was also an ordeal), I told him the advice which was given to the Trent boys by the Bishop who confirmed me—a good, but pompous man. In an informal address when we were on parade, Dr. Trollope pointed us to the example of his brothers and himself: "The first is a Peer of the Realm, the second was a Commander-in-Chief, and the third is a Bishop." "Absurd nonsense; what a fool!" was the Master's comment.

In the days with which these notes are concerned Canon Fremantle (afterwards Dean of Ripon) was Chaplain and Theological Tutor, and I read under him for the Final Honour School of Theology. It must be admitted that ours was not a good College for the study of Theology, and Fremantle did not appear to be quite happy in his position, nor was he in touch with "the Schools." As a preacher his trumpet sounded an even vaguer note than Jowett's. He seldom or never touched on points of doctrine, but gave us discourses on philanthropic and ethical subjects. I recall one on "How to conduct an argument"! He was personally of a kindly disposition, and no bitter or sarcastic word fell from his lips. He conscientiously tried in various ways to influence the undergraduates; he had, e.g., a class for the study of the Greek Testament in his house on Sunday evenings; and before the mid-term Communion Service, which was open to all denominations, he sometimes invited some well-known clergyman to address those who hoped to attend.

Mr. Chavasse spoke at one of these gatherings in the Library. He was at all times a " Loud Speaker," and " the Canon's roar " was a byword.

Jowett was sometimes called a " Tuft-hunter," but if he was, it was in the interests of the College. One thing for which some of us, looking back, feel grateful to him was his habit of inviting distinguished preachers, some of whom were far removed from his own school of thought, to preach in Chapel. Among these were Bishop Boyd-Carpenter (the Master's favourite preacher), whom I heard twice, Bishop Welldon (then Head Master of Harrow), Bishop Gore (Head of Pusey House), the late Archbishop Temple (then Bishop of London), and the present Archbishop of Canterbury (Vicar of St. Mary's). Dr. Temple also preached on the first Sunday of the term after the Master's death, and took as his text Hebrews xi. 1. His eyesight was so bad that he had to be guided to and from his place in the Chapel. In Jowett's lifetime it was touching to see the two old men in their robes coming in and going out arm-in-arm.

When the Master's seat was draped in black, the Dean (Mr. Strachan-Davidson, who was subsequently Master) led the Bishop by the hand. It was an act of true faith and courage on the part of Dr. Temple to accept the Primacy of the Church some three years later, despite this serious disability.

Courage of a different kind was shown by Dr. Welldon and Dr. Lang in the sermons which were preached by them on " We walk by faith, not by sight," and " Lord, to whom shall we go ? " . . . Each expressed unmistakably the doctrine of the true divinity of Our Lord. The former, standing almost beside Jowett (for there was no pulpit), argued most impressively that if all the criticism of the previous fifty years had done nothing else it had at least shown that the personality of Christ could not be brought down to the level of ordinary men. The latter stated his feeling that when a man came back to attempt to teach others in the place where he had been taught, he should have something to teach, and then proceeded to point to Christ as alone " the Way, the Truth, and the Life." The echoes of these sermons have not yet passed away.

Among eminent preachers whom we had the privilege of hearing outside the College Chapel mention may be made of Archbishop Benson, who preached the " Humility Sermon " at St. Mary's one year, and Bishop King of Lincoln, Canon Gore, and Dean Paget (afterwards Bishop of Oxford). Dr. King was noted for his apt use of homely illustrations, and one instance of this may be given. One Sunday on which he had preached the University Sermon earlier in the day, he addressed a large meeting in Christ Church Hall in the evening. Speaking of the need of wisdom in efforts to reach the " submerged classes," he took up a box of matches which lay upon the table, with the words " Rub lightly " printed on the cover, and then used them to point the moral.

A powerful influence was exerted on the young life of the University, as well as upon theological thought in higher circles,

by Charles Gore. *Lux Mundi*, of which he was the editor, had been published in 1889, and created a sensation comparable to that caused by *Essays and Reviews* in an earlier generation. His own essay on "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration" was particularly criticized. His Bampton Lectures in 1891 on "The Incarnation of the Son of God" attracted wide attention when published, and (unlike most discourses of the kind) were a treat to hear, delivered as they were with perfect enunciation in a clear, ringing voice. I had the privilege of listening to them all, and stood for an hour to hear one. No preacher in my time drew the undergraduates like Gore, and none spoke so plainly on matters which affected their daily lives. When he was announced to preach on "Sin," "The Saviour," or "The Control of the Body," on a Sunday evening at St. Mary's, young men flocked from all the Colleges to hang upon his words. I remember in particular one sermon to which perhaps nearly a thousand listened with rapt attention while the preacher held up Christ crucified, and expounded the doctrine of an objective Atonement. There was something magnetic in his personality, and of all preachers I have ever heard he seemed most to lose himself in his message. If one word more than any other could characterize his pulpit utterances in those days it should, I think, be Earnestness. Such preachers are few in number, but when they arise an audience is never wanting. Totally different in style was Dean Paget, who was making his reputation as the best preacher of written sermons in the Church of England. They required sustained attention, but well repaid the effort. His published sermons show that he employed sentences that now and again almost cover a page of printing. One useful asset of a preacher which he possessed in common with Canon Gore (who in after years succeeded him in the see of Oxford), was a strong, resonant voice which easily filled the Cathedral in which he generally preached. In appearance he looked like a mediæval ascetic who had in some way strayed from the bygone centuries into the cloisters of Christ Church, but there was something very attractive in his countenance, which was probably due to the impress of character, as he was not "good-looking" in the ordinary sense. One member of "the House" whom I knew was a daily worshipper in the Cathedral, and testified that he "liked to look at Paget."

A preacher who drew large congregations every Lent to the Church in which he annually preached a course of sermons, was Canon Knox-Little. He had a special gift for metaphor, and was extraordinarily eloquent, but sometimes forgot the dignity of the pulpit, as when he referred, in quite a pathetic tone, to "my miserable little balance at my bankers." The preacher who helped me most was Mr. Chavasse, but to him I have been permitted to bear my humble testimony in an earlier number of this magazine.

There was more of active religious life in our College than might be imagined by some. Prayer Meetings were not unknown, and we had our own Church Society, of which the present writer was Vice-President, and at which helpful words were spoken to us from

time to time by Canons Gore and Ottley, and Mr. Chavasse. A leading member was G. W. Hockley (now Archdeacon of Truro). Others were Frank Fletcher, Head Master of Charterhouse, and the sitting member for St. Alban's, Col. F. E. Fremantle.

One who seldom joined in debate was F. C. N. Hicks, the present Bishop of Gibraltar. But, though at present both Primates of the Church of England are Balliol men, churchmanship has never been a strong feature in a College which on account of its liberal outlook draws many Nonconformists to its fold. Some of my own friends were frequenters of Mansfield College Chapel, where I have heard instructive sermons from the Rev. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren") and Mr. Hugh Price Hughes. The widow and family of the latter were in later days constant visitors at a house in the parish in King's Co. which was for several years the sphere of my ministry, and when there always attended the Church Services.

The house founded by John de Balliol "and Dervorguilla his wife" has always naturally been a favourite place of study for Scotsmen, who are not as a rule rabid Churchmen. Three of Jowett's four successors in office have been Scotsmen. One of my own "set" was J. E. MacFadyen, now one of the Professors at the United Free Church College, Glasgow, whose writings on the Old Testament need no advertisement.

Among the dons a somewhat unusual type was Sir John Conroy, the Science Tutor. His name recalled Queen Victoria's earlier years, as the first baronet (also "Sir John") was the young Princess's tutor at Kensington Palace. Conroy was a fine specimen of a Christian gentleman, truly religious, a faithful son of the Church of England, and, in manner, of unflinching politeness towards all. It was he who, referring to his own undergraduate days, said of the well-known Rector of St. Aldate's, "Christopher was the only one who seemed to remember that I had a soul to be saved." Another of the Fellows was E. J. Palmer, until lately Bishop of Bombay, whose earnest advocacy of the proposed scheme for reunion in Southern India, which has just received the unanimous approval of the Bishops assembled at Lambeth, is known to all.

In the Theological School I attended lectures on the Old Testament by both Professors Driver and Cheyne. The former had a habit of repeating his sentences which, though slightly irritating, made it easier to take notes of them. The latter's style of lecturing must have been a surprise to those who knew with what vigour he could "go the whole hog" in destructive criticism in his writings. He had a shy, nervous manner, and appeared to wish to hide behind his desk.

In the domain of New Testament exegesis Dr. Walter Lock was one to whom it was my good fortune to listen, but, doubtless owing to some perversity of taste on my part, I did not find him so interesting as he had formerly been when expounding the mysteries of the Greek Drama. Canon Ottley was a singularly clear and helpful teacher. There must be not a few who can still testify that his learned, lucid, and carefully arranged

lectures on the doctrine of the Incarnation taught them much. But of all of whom I had experience I would give the palm for ability as a lecturer to Canon Bright, Professor of Ecclesiastical History. He enjoyed his own task, and was an adept at exciting and holding the interest of his class. Two illustrations of his method abide in the memory. Describing the appearance of the great protagonist of the Faith at Nicæa, he informed us, "My predecessor in this Chair, the late Dean Stanley, himself a very small man (this with obvious enjoyment), was fond of making a list of little men who became famous in history, and he always began with Athanasius." At another time, speaking of the same Father, he introduced the story of Arsenius by saying in a dramatic manner, "And now we come to The Mystery of the Dead Man's Hand."

Of course, even a classical and theological student does not spend all his time "poring over miserable books" and hearing words of wisdom, but, even if space permitted, the pages of a Church quarterly are not the place in which to describe the lighter side of University life. One recollection of "the Union" may be permitted. I heard F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead) make his maiden speech in a debate on "Local Option," at which the late Sir Wilfred Lawson was the guest of the evening, and A. V. Magee (son of a former Archbishop of York) was in the Chair. It was a notable effort, which gave promise of his subsequent brilliant career.

After I had taken my degree I migrated from the College of which John Wycliffe was once Master, and which cherishes an ancient portrait of "the morning star of the Reformation," to Wycliffe Hall, where I had the great advantage of a year's training under the late Bishop of Liverpool. The Vice-Principal was the Rev. J. Walmsley, who was afterwards Bishop of Sierra Leone, in which arduous post he succeeded E. H. Elwin, another Wycliffe man. Among my friends there was Cyril Bardsley, now Bishop of Leicester (and formerly of Peterborough).

For many years the writer of these notes has been unable to revisit his Alma Mater, and now his "daily course" runs not by the Isis but the Suck (a tributary of the Shannon). There is perhaps little of the spirit of Oxford in what most readers of "The Churchman" would, no doubt, call "the wilds of Connacht" (though the Rector of an adjoining parish was a pupil of Dean Inge at Hertford College). But this only serves to make more fragrant the memory of days spent there.

"Quo semel est imbuta recessus servabit odorem testa diu."
