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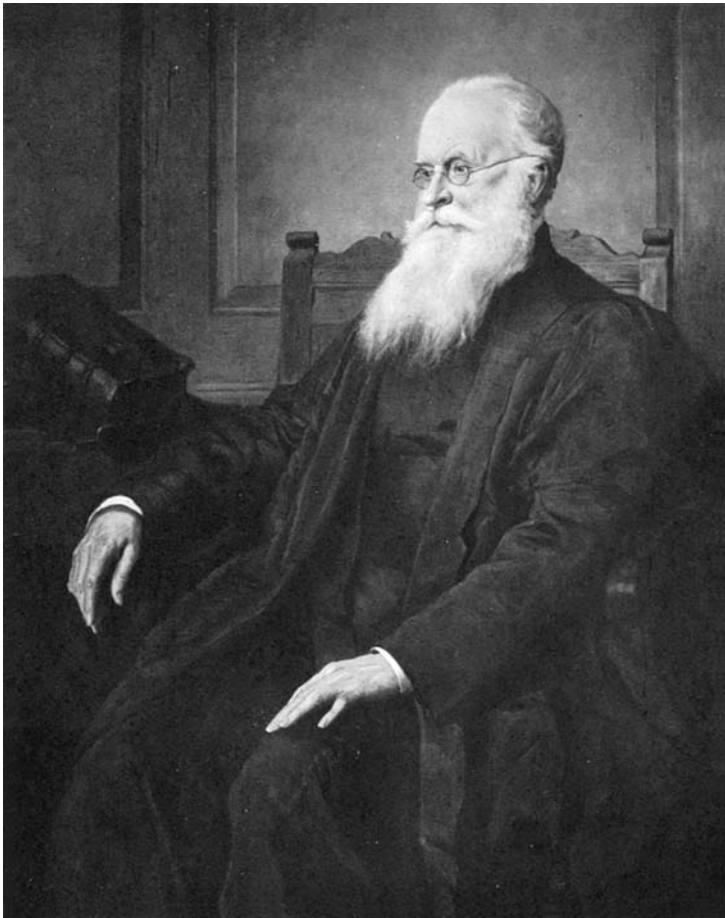
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PETER MASON

From the painting by Charles Brock

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CAMBRIDGE RETROSPECT

BY
T. R. GLOVER

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AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1943

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To

E. A. BENIANS
MASTER OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE

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PLATES

Peter Mason	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Professor Mayor	<i>page 84</i>
Professor Liveing	<i>„ 90</i>

Thanks are expressed to the Council of St John's College for permission to reproduce these three portraits.

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Des a man, honey. Dat's all. Dat's all I
knows—des wunner dese yer mans w'at
you see trollopin 'roun' eve'y day. No-
body ain't never year w'at his name is.

UNCLE REMUS

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil.

THOMAS GRAY

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PREFACE

People work at Colleges in different ways. The Junior Bursar, as we call him at St John's—he may have other titles elsewhere—thinks of a College as a series of buildings, where roofs leak and taps freeze, and undergraduates complain of the bath system. The Steward thinks of a kitchen, a dinner committee of young men, a suggestion-book, cooks and commissariat. The Senior Bursar of St John's has written a valuable financial history of the College. Tutors live upon University regulations, the *Reporter* and the *Ordinances*, and think of examinations. Of all these things nothing will be found in this book; it cannot be used as a substitute for the *Ordinances*.

Πόλις γὰρ ἄνδρες—so I read in the first play of Aeschylus with which I wrestled as a schoolboy. If a state is to be thought of not as a series of monuments, trivial or magnificent, nor as a constitution, but as a human society of kindred blood and kindred aims, something of the same sort is true of a College; and that is the theme of this book. Perhaps—for I have friends across the Atlantic—my little book will cross the Ocean; and over there there may be those who will be ready to read in briefest outline (but, I hope, not without a human interest) how the University and its Colleges came into being as the result of the interplay of human needs, human passions and human hopes. Human contacts are still the main feature of College life; and some chapters try to describe that life. Lastly from 'documents' (what a big word for nonsense in *The Granta!*) an attempt is made to illustrate undergraduate life, as I knew it half a century ago; and perhaps it has not essentially changed yet. Those who read the Gawdy letters

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(see pages 26–28) will perhaps think it has not fundamentally changed in three centuries. Who would have wished it to change—this splendid union of youth and College—*ἡβᾶν μετὰ τῶν φίλων*?

I have said that many of the quotations in Chapter VI come from *The Granta*—from the first five or six volumes of it, one excepted which some visitor had borrowed. Some of the more vigorous verses were clearly written by R. C. Lehmann, the genial and robust ‘Rudie Lehmann’, rowing man and Liberal M.P., and author of the delightful *Harry Fludyer*, which might well be republished. (Rumour said he got his mother to write Harry’s mother’s letters; I hope it is true.) But at least two poems quoted come from an in-College source, a MS. magazine. Thus: about 1890 Cameron Waller (long since a Professor at London, Ontario) got a College reading-room established, complete with suggestion-book. Suggestions grew so fast and furious that Waller suppressed the book. Its place was at once taken by ‘The Licensed Wallerer’s Gazette’, the work chiefly of R. H. Forster and ‘Bally’ Harris. Later on pieces from this were printed with the odd title *Washings from the Wallerer*. (I know the origin of this title, but, like Herodotus, I do not mention it.)

This work contained J. J. Alexander’s verses, quoted on pages 123 and 124, the tutor’s testimonial (with the motto from *Paradise Lost*, Book II, ‘Others apart sat on a HILL retired’) and *De Disgustibus*. I should say that I was told as a freshman that Lady Margaret had bequeathed to the College a million tons of bottled gooseberries, which we were still in the late ‘eighties working through. The reader may think this improbable; it seemed more credible at the time than he might imagine; but see Alexander’s poem. It was not his only contribution to *The Wallerer* on the dinner question. The cook of the period was a Mr Cash; hence

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the statement of C. A. M. Pond (afterwards a Professor in New Zealand) in *The Wallerer* that Lady Margaret had left Cash to found the College, for which purpose he had invented his celebrated pie-crust. That perhaps passed; but when Alexander parodied Cowper's 'Toll for the brave'—

Toll for the cow,
 The cow that is no more;
 She is an angel now;
 Her age was forty-four,

with other less plaintive verses, 'the rustle of the writ was heard in the land'; and the whole affair went to the College Council who discouraged writs and made peace. It was said that, when the *Washings* went before the Council, Professor Mayor was heard to ejaculate: 'Shade of Aristophanes! is this wit?' He had stumbled on a couplet in a 'Johnian Topsy-turveydom'—

The Junior Dean was heard to swear,
 And steaks rejoiced Professor Mayor.

The Junior Dean was Alfred Caldecott, who perhaps did not himself as a rule swear, but he made others swear, virtuous and sinful alike, everybody; *qui facit per alium*...

The first reading room is now incorporated in the College Library—the pitch-pine portion. The next was the so-called 'Old Music Room', which R. F. Scott used to say he once visited. One undergraduate was in the room, who at once went out. By and by another came in, and looked at Scott, as if Scott ought to have known that it was etiquette for only one man to read the papers at one time; so Scott went out, he said. The modern reading room is larger and better, and its furniture (bought with W. A. Cox's bequest) is more modern still—none of my choosing. But there is little tangible in College to recall me—a handle on a door I would claim. No great monument that! you say; but consider.

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A suggestion involving expenditure of £1000 would at once have stirred the imagination of the Junior Bursar of that day; it was a feat indeed to get him to do something that cost less than nine-pence. I find in fifty-five years that things are forgotten in College—things and people. Let me drift back, however, to my proper task, the past and the people of the past; and add that in the case of nearly everybody I have mentioned—*nearly* everybody—I would say with Dr Johnson

Yet still he fills affection's eye.

T. R. G.

February 1943