

"Ragging" at Oxford.

In the English universities, as at all other places where young men are congregated together, a good amount of practical joking takes place, sometimes on a large scale. This is popularly known as "ragging." An individual may be "ragged" if he makes himself obnoxious to the other members of his college. This usually takes the form of breaking his windows and making hay of his furniture; but, as a matter of fact, a man who is disliked is generally left alone, unless he is particularly offensive. The great delight of the "varsities" is to hoax the powers that be. A short time ago there was a lot of talk about the "ragging" that went on in the army, and so people down at Oxford began to think it was a good opportunity to "take a rise" out of somebody.

The idea of a gigantic hoax suggested itself to some Magdalen men, who were joking with the Hon. H. Lygon, one of them pretending to worry his waistcoat. They thought it would make an excellent headline, "Younger Brother of a Peer Bitten on the Chest." Accordingly they wrote up to a great London daily of large circulation, saying that the situation at Oxford was getting intolerable, and mentioning various fictitious occasions on which harmless individuals had been subjected to barbarous ill-treatment. The bait was swallowed; the paper thought it was a good opportunity for "raising Cain," and so they sent down a reporter to investigate matters. The Magdalen men had made their preparations with careful stage management. They had arranged with a number of their friends to saunter into their rooms casually while the reporter was there, and to relate the latest outrage inflicted on them. Everything went swimmingly. In the midst of it all a great noise was heard outside, and an excited person burst in, crying, "Save me! Don't let them come in!" The others rushed to hold the door upon which sticks rattled from the outside, with cries of "Let us get at him!" The reporter was quite taken in, and went back to town and wrote a column and a half, which appeared in the next morning's edition with big headlines.

The 'varsity shook with delirious joy, and

there was such a run on the paper that every copy was gone before twelve. The most delightful controversy began. Venerable clergymen wrote to the papers to say how the 'varsity had deteriorated since their day; and there was a general exclamation of "Disgraceful," "Perfectly scandalous," and so forth. Unfortunately, just when the controversy was at its height, and those in the know were thoroughly enjoying it, a rival paper got wind of the hoax through another man in the college, and exposed the whole working of the thing, so that the affair ended abruptly. I believe that the man who gave the show away did get "ragged."

For some unknown reason, the people who live in the town of Oxford are the special bete noire of the undergraduate. He designates them contemptuously as townees, and there is no greater insult you can pay an undergraduate than to take him for a townee. In former times conflicts were frequent between the townees and the students, but these town and gown rows occur rarely now; the last one, I think, took place on the night peace was declared after the Boar war, but that was before I went up to Oxford, and so I did not see anything of it. A special delight is naturally taken in getting a rise out of local dignitaries. About the best "rag" of this kind which was ever brought off occurred at Cambridge, the sister university, though several of the men who worked it were from Oxford.

Some Eastern potentate was staying in London and word was sent down that he was coming to visit Cambridge. A party of sombre-hued gentlemen arrived at the London station, which was even decorated in their honor, and a special train conveyed them to Cambridge, where they were received by the mayor and all the local dignitaries in their robes and chains of office. They drove up in state to a hall, where a magnificent luncheon was served them and afterwards they were shown round the colleges, everything being explained to them by an interpreter, they had brought with them. Subsequently, they returned to London. It was rather a blow for the local worthies when someone received a telegram saying that the Eastern potentate in question had not been out of his hotel that day, and it gradually dawned on them that they had been hoaxed. It made quite a sensation at the time, but nothing happened to the wags themselves, though the authorities could probably have found out who they were. The whole affair was carried out with great coolness, and for sublime cheek it takes a lot of beating. At the London railway terminus the officials even apologized for the fact, that owing to the short notice given, none of the directors had been able for come and receive the supposed Oriental monarch and his suite. The "raggers" were phenomenally lucky, as it so happened that all the great Oriental scholars were away from the university at the time, otherwise they would have been found out immediately.

It is rare, however, that men are to be found who are capable of carrying out a "rag" on so large a scale without giving the whole thing away. As a rule, "rags" are much less ambitious, if more noisy. They usually end in proctorial fines all round, or sometimes the offenders are sent down. A few years ago a Trinity College man was sent down for a term for some offence or other. He thought it would be nice to have a funeral procession, and so he engaged a hearse to take him to the station, with all his friends driving slowly behind in carriages with black horses. They crawled at a snail's pace through the town in the middle of the day. On the way the individual in the hearse met his tutor and greeted him politely, but that worthy, instead of being pleased, reported him to the college, which sent him down for good, for making game of his punishment. It seems a severe punishment, but I don't think the person most concerned worried about it much, being a happy-go-lucky individual.

The Encenia or the day on which honorary degrees are given to great men in the Sheldonian theatre is always an occasion on which the undergraduates have some fun at the expense of their elders and betters. The proceedings take place on the floor of the building, and the undergraduates occupy the top gallery. By tradition they are allowed to call out anything they like from aloft. I remember when a degree was being conferred on Lord Litchener, he was looking particularly stern and severe. There were loud cries from the gallery of "Cheer up, Kitch," "Smile, please," and so forth. Lord Litchener, however, so far from unbending, was very angry about it, I believe, and vowed never to visit us again. Any little incident which may occur is seized upon to make fun of. The degrees are conferred by the chancellor of the university, which dignity is at present held by Lord Goshen. This is indeed about the only occasion in the year when the chancellor comes to Oxford. After the degrees, the winners of university prize competitions read their effusions, an ordeal which, as may be imagined, is somewhat trying to them. On one occasion one of the readers had a particularly whining, sing-song voice. The gallery was not slow to take this up, and there was soon a whining accompaniment from aloft. Everybody was smiling. M.



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Paul Sabbatier, the distinguished French scholar, who had just been given a degree, tried hard to keep his countenance, with the traditional politeness of his race, but it was too much, and he was obliged to laugh with the rest. The reader went on with his essay, nothing daunted, and at the end received a round of applause.

Ass or Lion?

A series of articles is appearing in the 'Speaker,' entitled 'Preachers of Yesterday.' The writer tells the story concerning Dr. Parker, which he says was current thirty years ago, of how a certain archdeacon ran up against a young curate just coming into Holborn after the mid-day Thursday service at the City Temple. 'Oh,' said the curate excitedly, 'why cannot we have preachers like that in the Church of England?' The archdeacon smiled grimly as he solemnly replied: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's ass.'

The writer adds truly, 'No one would have enjoyed the archdeacon's story more than the genial doctor himself, who, if he had anything asinine about him, managed to conceal it under a faultless lion-skin.'

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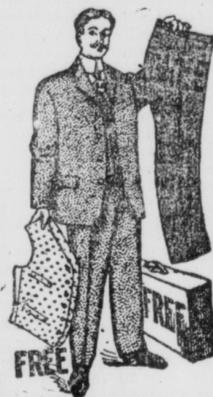


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Standing as at Dec. 31st, 1905:

Insurance in force.....	\$87,827,606.00
Income.....	1,663,854.13
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Keeping Ahead.

William Farnum, leading man in that big spectacular performance, "The Prince of India," tells the following amusing story: While on the road one dull afternoon he visited an insane asylum and was shown over the establishment by one of the inmates. So impressed was Farnum with the man's sanity that he finally asked:

"And what are you in here for, my man?" Immediately a cunning look came into the man's eyes and he looked about him warily.

"I'll tell you if you keep it dark," he said lowering his voice, "I have a mania for swearing. I write 'cuss-words' all around. It's great sport. Why, they have to hire a man just to follow me around and rub them out. But," coming a little closer, "I'll tell you a secret. I'm four 'damns' ahead of him and I've got 'hell' written all over your back!"—November Young's Magazine.

Might Find Her Friend.

In one of our large department stores an obliging salesman had taken every roll of cloth but one from the shelves to show to a persistent woman. The last roll was on the

top shelf.

"You needn't bother any more," she replied to the weary clerk who was about to reach for the remaining roll, "I was simply waiting for a friend."

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