

"ATTRACTIVE, BUT RESTLESS AND VOLATILE"—AMERICAN RHODES SCHOLARS

ATTRACTIVE and attracted, but restless, volatile and never educated with thoroughness."

That seems to sum up the opinion of Oxford "dons" regarding American Rhodes scholars at Oxford, if letters published in the last report of the Carnegie Foundation are to be believed. In view of the recent controversy as to how the American Rhodes scholars are looked upon at Oxford and how they themselves look upon that ancient English seat of learning, the letters are most interesting.

They are intimate in character, showing minute and keen observation. Originally they were not intended for publication, having been written as reports to the executive officers of the Rhodes Trust, who were desirous of knowing exactly what the situation at Oxford was in so far as the men benefiting from the fund left by the late Cecil Rhodes were concerned. Eventually, the letters from the tutors were turned over to the Carnegie Foundation by Dr. George R. Parkin, General Representative of the Rhodes Trust, in order that they might be included in the Foundation's annual report.

Before giving the extracts from these letters, it may be well to explain a few terms used by the tutors, for the benefit of American readers unversed in the technicalities of Oxford English.

An "open scholar" is a man who gets an entrance scholarship in open competition. Such scholars are the pick of the boys from the secondary schools. A "commoner" is a man who has not obtained a scholarship at entrance. "Honor Moderations" is a serious examination in Latin and Greek. By "Pass Moderations" is meant small examination in the same subjects, also in logic or elementary mathematics.

Here are twenty-one excerpts from the letters written by Oxford "dons" about American Rhodes scholars:

1. "A. has done well in athletics and is a distinctly popular man in college. Reports about his work are fairly satisfactory, but he is, like most of these Americans, rather a dilettante and does not care very much for the grind."

2. "B. is quite regular, punctual, and respectable. He is one of those who chafe at the discipline and rules—not unreasonably, I think—and we have re-

leased them a bit. No less than four of our Americans this last year have broken off in mid-course and gone back. Only one was a Rhodes student; but it shows the tendency. They are attractive and attracted, but restless, volatile and never educated gründlich."

3. "The Rhodes scholars who have come to this college from the United States are in point of natural ability fully the equal of our ordinary open scholars; in point of energy, seriousness, and force of character they are, in my judgment, decidedly their superiors. Their early training, on the other hand, has been less thorough, and of this they are themselves conscious."

4. "I gather from the reports of the tutors in this college that the American Rhodes scholars are quite up to the level of the average British undergraduate in ability, and rather above it in industry and interest in their work."

5. "I may say honestly that I have nothing to report as to our American Rhodes scholars that would be useful. They vary a good deal. As regards the undergraduates, they live a good deal apart and have never identified themselves with the life of the college as the colonists have. On the other hand, I should say that they have as a rule more capacity, and certainly more definitely formed characters, than these last."

6. "Let me say that we have no cause for complaint as to the general conduct of the Americans whom we have in this college. At first we were a little uneasy about them, particularly about those who were above the average in age. We thought that they might resent the necessary, but to them unfamiliar, rules of the college system. We thought also that they might tend to form a clique apart. I am glad to say that these fears have evaporated.

"There were some slight difficulties at first; but these have been entirely overcome, largely owing to the good sense and good feeling of the scholars themselves. They are at present quite in touch with the social life of the college, and they accept college discipline as a matter of course.

"About their work we are not quite so well satisfied. The American scholars who have come to us are intelligent and

This Is the Opinion of Oxford "Dons" in Letters Appearing in Carnegie Foundation Report.

interested in many subjects. But they seldom or never settle down to do a long spell of thorough work. They have nearly all ceased to develop by the time they graduate in the States, and do not really feel inclined to go much further. It must be remembered, also, that they have not the same incentive to work as a colonist scholar. The latter knows that honors gained at an English university will be of some help to him in after life. The American, on the other hand, feels that his future career does not depend in any appreciable degree upon our examinations.

"In any case, whether these are the right impressions or not, our American scholars seem inclined to drift from one subject to another, taking a bird's-eye view of each, and resting content with that."

7. "The American Rhodes scholars are certainly as a body more strenuous and serious than the ordinary undergraduate; and I should say that, apart from early training, they compare very favorably with the ordinary scholar."

8. "The American scholars in this college do not offer a wide basis for induction; but my impression would be that, while the men from the best universities are quite as good as all but our very best home products, those from the inferior universities have the disadvantage of thinking they are good when they are not—which is about what the ordinary public school boy suffers much from."

9. "With regard to the Americans in particular, I should say that they vary more than the others. While the only Rhodes scholar we have had who has failed in Pass School is an American, and also the only one I remember who was seriously reproved for idleness, my impression is that another American is at present our very best Rhodes scholar. I think that their early training makes them in some cases superficial and inaccurate; but their is plenty of intellectual vigor and acumen. I do not think that Oxford could expect to get the pick of

American universities, as we do, I hope, of colonial; and the distribution of colleges is such as to favor the weaker American colleges. But having said that, I still am strongly convinced that the Americans in college both do and get good.

"Taking a more general view, I would compare the American scholars with our average good commoner for ability and energy. They seem to me to lack accuracy and (as a rule) the power of hard grind; but they are intelligent, interested in their work, and quite as industrious as the average young Englishman."

10. "Our American scholars are intelligent, keen, and alert, and there has not been a hint of slackness or idleness since they first came. In some respects they started at a bit of a disadvantage. Their American course is wider than ours, but not so thorough at any point, and they have had to alter their methods a little and readjust their point of view. At present, therefore, results are an unfair test; but I am quite sure that the men are working, and working well.

"No doubt many of the American Rhodes scholars come up with a curious superficiality of training and a diffuseness of interests which have made it hard for them to decide on a career or even on a definite course of study. No doubt, also, one has come across an instance of slackness or extravagance among them. But it would be wholly unfair on that account to say that the American Rhodes scholars have done little good here except in the way of athletics. If they are not as clever as our open scholars, they are certainly in industry and seriousness of purpose the equals of any body of men in Oxford."

11. "I can report well of C, both as to his studies and life. He is a very high-minded and seriously disposed young man. He is also able and clear sighted, and very willing to admit any misconception under which he may have acted. Good man all round though he is, yet he has well illustrated the truth of what is

so often seen and said, that the Americans begin with being too knowing. One thing C especially recognizes as new to him, namely, our Oxford thoroughness; he had never seen anything of the kind before. An extra year would have done him immense good."

12. "D has been reading for honors, and I never wish for a more satisfactory pupil. His essays were always thorough, thoughtful, and well expressed. His work showed a rare combination of originality and ingenuity with sound judgment and common sense. In college life he was a strong influence, and always for good. Taking him all round, we have had no better man in college since he has been with us, and few as good."

13. "E is an intelligent man and had no difficulty with the ordinary examinations; but his knowledge was vague and he had great difficulty in expressing himself fully, or clearly, or precisely. That is the general impression I have gathered about the American scholars—that they have a general knowledge, but have been taught nothing very precisely, and have not been accustomed to write and express themselves clearly and with precision. They do not appear to study a subject as a whole, as we do, but, after attending courses of lectures on a portion of a subject, they appear to drop that and never revise it again. They never appear to have any comprehensive examination on the whole of a subject."

14. "With regard to the American Rhodes scholars I think that their training in America has in most cases encouraged smattering in a large number of subjects. As a general rule, they know nothing well, but know something about a great many things—the kind of knowledge you might get from attending public lectures. Moreover, apparently even in scientific studies they have not been accustomed to keeping their hold on work for any great length of time. The examinations appear to be in work which has not been done very long before the date of the examination intended to test it. As a

consequence, they at first find the Oxford system difficult, for the double reason that they are expected to get up a subject thoroughly, and are tested by an examination much longer and more severe than that to which they have been accustomed and on an extensive range of work, some of which has necessarily been done a considerable time before the examination takes place. The men naturally differ in ability."

15. "It is difficult to generalize as to the capacity of the American Rhodes students. Some few are men of large capacity and have evidently been well trained. They are accustomed to getting up the details of a complicated subject. Others have evidently been trained in getting up so large a range of subjects as is required for an Honor School. The degree is in many cases what is especially sought, and by the shortest cut."

16. "With certain exceptions, the American Rhodes scholars have been inclined to be rather too mechanical and dependent in their work, and generally to get up, rather than get into, things. Generally they have shown little sense of scholarship, and their American training does not seem to prepare them for the Honors work. In certain cases, they seem singularly uneducated. One notices among both the abler and ordinary students the same general characteristics—a great power of making a good show of a small amount of knowledge, a readiness to be content with surface generalizations, often effectively put, without probing the matter to the bottom. The Oxford standard of accuracy and detail is quite new to them. They are, however, quick and original, and soon take to an exacter standard and a more thorough way of working. Many of them make the mistake of thinking that they are qualified to begin research work, either when they first come up or after rushing a trial school in two years or less, not realizing that one must have more than a superficial knowledge of what is already known of a subject before adding new knowledge thereto."

17. "We must remember that the Rhodes scholars are generally older men; and this explains, in part at least, the more mature character of their work. On the other hand, the fact that they have most of them taken a degree elsewhere before

coming here explains a certain staleness and the absence of freshness and vigor."

18. "The Rhodes scholars who have come to me are on the average below the open scholar standard. Their training seems to lack thoroughness."

19. "The Rhodes scholars who have come to me have done well. I do not think, however, that their general cultivation is high, and I doubt if their general knowledge is wide. But they are good men, they know what they are after, and in most cases 'deliver the goods.'"

20. "The American scholars whom we have had differ very much in respect to ability and force of character as well as in their previous training; but of all of them, even of the ablest, I think it may be said that they have suffered for the want of training in correct methods. This would apply to those who have come here to study science, medicine, law or history, quite as much as to those who have read classics. What they lack is the sort of training that Honor Moderations gives to our Honor men and Pass Moderations, or A 1, to our Pass men. They seem to me never to have learned how to face a real problem; they have preferred to study too many subjects, of most of which they have acquired the merest smattering. The effect of this is the intellectual demoralization, quite apart from the waste of time involved.

21. "As to the American Rhodes scholars, I am much impressed by the men personally. They are above the average, I think, as regards keenness and industry. I should describe them as thoroughly good fellows, but I do not think they compare with the better average undergraduates as regards scholarship and training. It will be understood that I speak of no given individual, but of a general impression, when I say that they seem very deficient in scholarship in a wide sense. Some are terribly rough intellectually, with little or no literary sense and very limited command over expression. In the composition of an English essay they have, as a rule, almost everything to learn. Their linguistic attainments are also, as a rule, slender.

"But they are quick to learn and very industrious, and by the end of their time here are decidedly above the average Honors-reading undergraduate."