

There was plenty to talk about up-stairs. Rose, her trousseau, her presents, her wedding, were a never-ending theme; and the heroine herself had no foolish objections to being the one subject of conversation, but thought it only natural and right that it should be so.

So the hours sped by, and the guests were beginning to disperse to concerts, to balls, to evening parties; and Lady Travers was by no means unwilling to speed their departure, for she and Rose, and Lord Marsland, who detested music, had no less than two concerts on their list for to-night. If only that dreadful telegram would either not come, or contain good news, there might be some prospect of enjoyment for them all.

A ring at the door-bell made her start and shiver; but she had still two or three couples on her hands, and must not give way to her curiosity. Rose had slipped up-stairs to put on her opera-cloak, and she was listening patiently to a rather wearisome account of a long illness that one of her friends had lately gone through, when Graves advanced into the room, and handed to her a second telegram. This time it was directed to her. Perhaps it was not from Rome after all.

Her inclination was to leave it unopened till such time as she was alone; but her friends begged her on no account to consider them, and reluctantly she broke open the envelope.

"Harry Leonard is dead. He died almost suddenly, and quite calmly, this morning. Break it gently to Miss Travers. I will write to her all particulars."

She felt herself grow pale as she read and re-read these few words. But the eyes of her guests were upon her, and, recovering herself, she looked up with that conventional smile that had become second nature to her. Crunching the telegram in her long fingers, she said, with a little laugh—

"Nothing very important. Fortunately, I am so accustomed to telegrams that I think very little of them. Marsland never writes: he always telegraphs; and when he is away, Rose receives about three a day from him;" and, with this explanation, the few lingering guests rose to depart; and Lady Travers was at length alone with her husband. Should she tell Dolly the news to-night, or wait till the next morning? She felt sincerely sorry for her stepdaughter, and thought she might as well enjoy a good night's rest, besides allowing Rose to go to her concerts without any qualms of conscience. Poor Harry was dead! Nothing could be done for him. With morning light would come counsel. Meanwhile, not even Sir Augustus should participate in the secret. On her shoulders alone should rest the responsibility of silence for to-night; and if she could not bear the burden without incurring blame, she was not the clever woman she took herself to be.

"Come, Marsland," she said, in her most cheerful voice, to her future son-in-law, who was reclining on a sofa in the back drawing-room; "the carriage is here."

"Won't you really let me off?" he asked, with a yawn. "I do hate those —"

But Lady Travers held up a warning finger.

"Those *horrid* concerts! Is that expression sufficiently lady-like to suit your ladyship?"

Lady Travers laughed. She was too wise to draw the curb too tightly.

"You are a bad boy, Marsland," she said; "but I suppose I must spoil you just this once. You need only show yourself at the Baillies, and then you can slip away. Poor Rose will be terribly disappointed; but you and she must settle that between you. Ah! here she is! Rose, my child, the carriage is here. We have only been waiting for you."

END OF CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FOURTH.

THE LONG VACATION AT CAMBRIDGE.



NE of the heaviest charges frequently made against the University system of our day, is that the amount of advantage obtained from the University is not in proportion to the expense of University life. It is argued that since College life costs on the average, to undergraduates, about £200 per annum, a very substantial quantity, as well as a very high

quality of instruction may reasonably be demanded. Undoubtedly the complaint is not altogether groundless. The Academical year is divided into three terms at Cambridge, and four at Oxford. At Oxford, however, though at first sight it would appear that four terms must necessarily contain more than three, such is not really the case, for, owing to the regulations as to the mode of "keeping" terms there, the actual length of residence during the year is very nearly the same at both Universities. At Cambridge, although the number of weeks during which residence must be kept is the same in all years, the dates of the commencement and end of two of the three terms are variable. The Michaelmas or October Term begins on the 1st of October, and ends on the 16th of December. Lent or January Term begins on the 13th of January, and ends on the Friday before Palm Sunday. Easter or Midsummer Term begins on the Friday after Easter Day, and ends on the Friday after Commencement Day, which

is always the last Tuesday but one in June. Thus the official University terms comprise about thirty-three weeks in the year. But to obtain a degree it is not necessary to reside throughout the whole of the official terms. The Statutes of the University only require that an undergraduate shall be in residence during two-thirds of each term, and hence a custom has arisen in many Colleges of only permitting the students to remain in Cambridge during the two-thirds of the term required by the University; and, on an average, an undergraduate is not compelled to reside during more than twenty-four weeks in the year. Should he wish to remain longer in residence, he will generally require special permission from the Tutor and Dean of his College; and this is not usually accorded unless some particular reason can be shown for granting it.

Hence it happens that the very large majority of Cambridge men have more than half of each year on their hands. Men who are filled with an enthusiasm for sports, or other amusements, to the exclusion of any very great desire for the elements of sound learning, naturally find such an arrangement far from disagreeable; but to those whose success at the University is a matter of some importance, it is found to be a serious loss to be deprived during so large a portion of the year of the ordinary means of acquiring knowledge. For the convenience of such students, a custom has arisen of allowing undergraduates who are understood to be reading for Honours to remain in Cambridge during two of the four months which comprise the usual Summer or "Long" Vacation.

It must be remembered that the authorities of each College have absolute power to refuse permission to reside, or to cut short the residence of any undergraduate at any time; and as most of the Fellows of Colleges are themselves absent during the Long, the domestic regulations are more strict than in ordinary term time. At the same time the University regulations are not in force, so that the abnormal stringency of the College rules is compensated to some extent by the unusual laxity of the University rules. Thus, in term, it is not considered a serious offence for a man to be out of his rooms from ten to twelve in the evening; but in the Long, such a proceeding would be sure at most Colleges to be noticed by the Dean of the College; while, on the other hand, during term time the University requires that after sunset on week-days, and during the whole of Sundays, undergraduate members of the University shall not appear in the town unless clad in the Academical cap and gown; but during the Long, no such distinctive dress is insisted on.

Of course there are no University lectures during the Vacation, nor as a rule are any courses delivered by the College authorities, but it is nevertheless generally found to be the most favourable time in the whole year for quiet study. There are none of the distracting excitements of term time; fewer men are in residence, and those who remain are there for the purpose of study rather than amusement. Moreover, although the University and College Lecturers are gently vegetating in a studious repose, or actively engaged in the acquisition of fresh stores of learning,

another class of instructors is energetically occupied in imparting information to the undergraduate mind.

Few men who hope to attain any position of distinction in the Tripos list, trust only to the advantage they may be able to glean from the regular courses of lectures. The usual practice with such men is to obtain the services of a private tutor in addition to the lectures they attend. This is of course an expensive system, but it is one that is almost universally adopted, and is indeed rendered absolutely necessary by the very high standard which an Honours man must reach. In lecturing to a large number of men, it is impossible for the lecturer to pay much attention to the requirements of individuals, who must therefore seek more particular instruction elsewhere, if they desire it. Hence has arisen the practice of "coaching." The Coaches are generally the most able men in their own branch of study; and the Fellow of a College who has once established a reputation for having the qualities of a good coach, speedily attracts the most promising undergraduates for his pupils. An instance of this is seen in the fact that the Senior Wrangler of this year was the twenty-second Senior Wrangler who had attained that proud pre-eminence by the assistance of the same well-known Coach. During the Long Vacation, coaching is carried on as in term, and at some Colleges it is one of the conditions of vacation residence that the undergraduate must be reading with some private tutor. Thus, although the usual modes of instruction are in abeyance, a great deal of good work may be and is, accomplished in the course of the summer months.

But in addition to the utility of residence, a Long Vacation spent at the "seat of learning" is certainly one of the pleasantest portions of a University career. In the first place, it embraces the best of the summer months, commencing early in July and ending with August, and although Cambridge may not be the most charming of summer abodes, it may easily be made very enjoyable. In most Colleges the different athletic clubs are not at work, but in their place "Long Vacation Clubs" are formed, and as there are but few devotees to each sport in residence, every one belongs to everything. Cricket is naturally the great amusement, and intercollegiate matches are arranged, at which, if the play is not so scientific as it sometimes is, the jollity is by no means lessened by the appalling performances of the "tail" men. Lawn tennis also obtains a very fair share of attention, and becomes unusually popular from the fact that the permission of the "Dons" is generally given to play even on that sacred territory, the College "Quad." During term, the lawns which adorn most of the ancient quadrangles are held inviolable, no undergraduate foot being permitted to tread thereon without rendering the owner liable to a fine; but in the Long, the grass is no longer so carefully preserved, and in hot weather easy chairs and tables make their appearance in shady spots, much to the benefit of the occupants. In the boating world, the chief event is the College servants' races. These are conducted on the same plan as the better-known May races among the members of the Colleges,

and are contested with scarcely less zeal and enthusiasm. It is said that on one occasion a worthy paterfamilias journeyed to Cambridge during the May Term, to introduce the scion of his house to the venerable Master of the College which in former years he himself had graded. On arriving at the gate, he was surprised to find the porter's lodge in charge of one small urchin.

"Is the Master at home?" asked the parent. "No, sir," was the reply.

"Is the Tutor in his rooms?" "No, sir."

"Is the Dean at home?" "No, sir."

"Well, then, is the Bursar or any other of the Fellows in the College?" "No, sir," said the imperturbable child, "and the porter's gone out too; there's only me left."

"Goodness me! where have they gone?" exclaimed the bewildered old gentleman.

"All gone to the river, to see the races, sir," answered the boy.

Whether so great excitement is a usual occurrence even in the May week may perhaps be doubted, and it would certainly be abnormal on the occasion of a Long Vacation race, but the amusements of the period are nevertheless not without considerable interest. A few years since, an eccentric Don offered a series of prizes to the ancient dames who performed the duties of bed-makers at one of the Colleges. They were to be competed for in the largest of the Quads, and at the time appointed the greatest merriment was occasioned by the spectacle of several of the bed-makers, all of them well advanced in years, and normally of a grave demeanour, contending with zeal in foot-races round the gravelled walks. But this was an event which does not come into the ordinary curriculum of the Long.

Besides sports, the Long Vacation Debating Society

is an institution which is frequently productive of a good deal of amusement. In the ordinary College Debating Societies during the term, speeches are made only by those who wish to exercise their powers of oratory; but in the Long, the number of voluntary speakers is of course reduced, and it is frequently made obligatory for every member to speak in his turn, whatever may be the subject of debate. Maiden speeches are then accomplished, and though in some cases the compulsory commencement leads to performances of greater value, in others the confusion of ideas, and still more of language, is sometimes distressing, but more often amusing. At an Exeter Hall meeting a few years ago, considerable interruption was caused by an individual who persisted in moving an amendment which had been ruled out of order. The audience tried in vain to hawl him down; he was not to be quenched until the chairman, appreciating the situation, quietly said, "Gentlemen, if you will remain silent, and allow this person to hear his own voice, we shall have no further trouble." The advice was followed, and the amendment was heard of no more. The same trepidation not unfrequently overcomes a would-be orator in a College Debating Society, but as every one present has been, or may be the next minute, in a similar plight himself, the failure as well as the hilarity it causes are taken in equally good part.

Such, then, are the studies and amusements of the Long Vacation at Cambridge. It has been suggested, and forcibly urged, that it is advisable to form the Long Vacation into a fourth term. That is a question on which much may be said on both sides, but it is at any rate clear that a man who is disposed to employ his time to the best advantage, is not compelled to pass the four months of the Long in idleness.

A HOLIDAY VISIT TO OTFORD.



IN the beautiful valley of Holmsdale, about two miles from Sevenoaks, is one of the most ancient and picturesque villages in Kent. But its antiquity, and the beauty of its situation in the centre of a circle of hills which bound a delightful landscape, are not its only attractions, for

owing to the absence of convenient railway accommodation, it retains an unusual quaintness and rusticity.

Many of its inhabitants have never made a journey to London, although the metropolis is but twenty-two miles distant, while the few strangers who find their way into the village are chiefly artists who come upon it in their peregrinations, or natives who have emigrated to other places.

The village is called Otford. In olden times it was known as Otter Ford, Otteford, and Ottenford—the last two appellations frequently appearing in ancient documents; but the true etymology of the word is believed to be, "At the Ford," Otford probably being a favourite place for crossing the narrow winding stream of the Darenth upon which it is situated, in the days of the Saxons.

The first mention of Otford in history is in connection with the powerful and victorious Offa, King of Mercia. Offa was fond of warfare, and did not shrink from shedding blood; but his conscience always reproved his behaviour, and induced him to make munificent gifts to the Church by way of atone-