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## LIFE AT OXFORD.

### RHODES SCHOLARS.

#### INTERVIEW WITH MR. BEHAN.

Mr. J. V. Behan, the first Rhodes Scholar from Victoria, is returning to Melbourne by the R.M.S. Himalaya, which arrived at the Semaphore anchorage on Saturday morning. His career at Oxford has been singularly successful; in fact, from an academic point of view, his achievements rank among the highest of any of the colonial scholars. Mr. Behan is making a brief visit to his relatives in Victoria, and during his stay he will be married to Miss Caldwell, a stepdaughter of the Rev. Daniel Mackenzie, formerly minister of St. George's Presbyterian Church, Collingwood.

#### —A Brilliant Career.—

Mr. Behan reached England at the latter end of 1904, and entered Hertford College. His successes since then have been remarkable. In March, 1906, he secured the Vinerian Law Scholarship; in June of the same year, first class in the honour school of jurisprudence and first class in the B.C.L. examination; and in the following November the Eldon Law Scholarship. In the examinations for admission to the English Bar, he obtained first class in constitutional history and law, first class in criminal law evidence and procedure, and a special prize of £50, at Easter, 1905, and first class in the final examination, and the certificate of honour and special prize from the Middle Temple in the Easter of 1906. To these distinctions must now be added the appointment of lecturer in law at University College, notification of which reached Mr. Behan by cable after he left London by the Himalaya. This is a record of hard work and close study, to which Mr. Behan referred in a few words when asked by a representative of The Register to talk about his doings at Oxford. The mere statement of facts, however, is sufficient to indicate that Mr. Behan has made every possible use of his opportunities at the great English seat of learning.

#### —Experiences at Oxford.—

Questioned regarding his experiences at Oxford, Mr. Behan said:—"They have been, on the whole, very pleasant, with some disappointments and a good many successes. I think the Rhodes Scholars are settling down now, and Oxford has got used to them. This in itself is a good thing, because they are not taken so much notice of as they were at first. Originally we were always introduced as Rhodes Scholars. It was most embarrassing. Now Oxford takes us as a matter of course, and the scholars enter the colleges without any inconvenience or experience of that kind. Yes; the majority of the Rhodes Scholars are working fairly well. They have not been so successful in sports as people expected they would be. Perhaps the Americans have been more successful than the colonials in that respect; but, on the other hand, the Americans have not been so successful in examinations. After all, sport is only one of several elements, and the Rhodes Scholars have not distinguished themselves on the whole in that direction."

"Presumably, Mr. Behan, your time has been occupied in preparation for examinations?"—"Yes, I may say so," was the smiling reply, "but I have rowed. I was in the college eight last year. I had two examinations at the time, and never actually rowed in a college contest."

#### —Heavy Financial Burdens.—

"Life in Oxford," continued the Rhodes Scholar, "is much the same as one had at the residential colleges in Melbourne beforehand. Of course the comforts are greater, but on the other hand a great deal more money is required. The £300 a year provided by the Rhodes Scholarships is just about sufficient with careful management to meet requirements. Expenses are just about double what they would be to live in college in Melbourne. Australian Rhodes Scholars are heavily handicapped by the fact that they have to pay much higher fares to England than those coming from other parts of the world, consequently it is not surprising if some should be a little hard up. It would be an advantage if some means could be found to lessen their expenses."

"Oxford is now familiar with Rhodes scholars," remarked Mr. Behan, "but during the early part of my career there the attentions bestowed upon me became embarrassing. The scholars are now allowed to settle down more comfortably. The life in college at Oxford is much the same as at the residential colleges in Melbourne. The comforts, however, are greater, and a great deal more money is required. The £300 per annum provided by the Rhodes Scholarship is just about sufficient to meet requirements with very careful management. My living expenses there were about double my Melbourne expenses. Australian Rhodes scholars are particularly handicapped by having to pay a much greater fare to reach Oxford than Rhodes scholars from elsewhere. I think the Australian Rhodes scholars have so far obtained a higher average than any of the other Rhodes scholars. Last year we had five first classes in the examinations, and altogether we have got four big University scholarships. The Burdett-Coutts Scholarship in Geology was won by J. A. Thompson of New Zealand, the Vinerian Law Scholarship for 1907 was won by Wilfred Barton, a son of Sir Edmund Barton, of New South Wales, and I won the Vinerian Law Scholarship for 1906 and the Eldon Law Scholarship. I am quite certain no other Rhodes scholars, Americans or colonials, can show so high an average. This success I can only attribute to the excellence of the training received out here. I am personally acquainted with Mr. Jolly, one of the South Australian Rhodes scholars. He obtained a first in physics last year."

"Concerning the educational system at Oxford. The principal thing to be observed is the lack of organisation, compared with our Australian universities. This may be due to the immense number of interests concentrated in Oxford and the enormous variety of subjects. Quite recently there were a series of articles in the 'Times,' suggesting various improvements, so as to make the organisation of the University more systematic. The articles were conjointly written by several of the Oxford dons. I think the articles will have a good effect. There is a suggestion that a Royal Commission should be appointed by the Government to make a thorough investigation."

Speaking upon his general impressions of England, Mr. Behan said:—"The first and most striking thing is the strong line of contrast between the rich and the poor. Compared with the poor in Australia the lot of the poorer class in England is much harder. Australians cannot realise unless they visit England the severity of the life of the English poor. The position of the agricultural laborer particularly is one of almost hopeless poverty. Another point which struck me was the great blessing Australia has enjoyed through the absence of church establishment. The unfriendly attitude of the Church to Nonconformists and vice versa is most pronounced. Jealousy is the cause of the trouble. The indifference of people in England towards everything colonial is another thing which impressed me. The people are not only ignorant concerning the colonies, but perfectly indifferent. I found this to be the case more at Oxford than elsewhere. The difficulties in the way of any scheme of Imperial federation for this reason are therefore great. Close political union between countries separated by the width of the whole globe is practically impossible unless those countries be under a despotism. Another impression is that the time will come when the colonies must show themselves to be the seat of the Empire's strength. War with Germany will come about some day. It will go hard with the mother country unless the colonies develop their military strength and also build themselves up commercially."

After his return to Oxford Mr. Behan hopes to do research and literary work in order to gain his D.C.L. degree. When the term of the Eldon scholarship expires he will go into chambers in London and be called to the bar, practice at the bar during his tenure of the Eldon Scholarship being prohibited.