Swinging his transit over his shoulder, Rockwell stalked across the field whistling.

Father Thorne walked home, slowly deliberating, like a man with a settled determination. Entering his study, he went to the desk and took up his letter of resignation to his Bishop. The faces of the dead quarryman and Jim Rockwell flashed before his eyes, and he slowly tore the letter into bits and cast them into the waste-basket.—*Rosary Magazine.*

ON UNIVERSITIES

MEDIEVAL AND MODERN

(By SHANE LESLIE, in the *Austral Light.*)

The Academic position of a University can be always judged by the fame her learning has acquired, not so much in her own courts at home as in the rumor of the stranger's abroad, not so much by the gross weight of distinctions that her degree-holders have gained in the examinations of life as by her real work accomplished (and one requiring a deeper and more intimate insight) in weaving the web of national culture, or actually in fashioning the fibres of history.

I do not think that it is possible to define what a University is at its loftiest level and working under ideal conditions. So rare a privilege and so hidden a gift as a real University belies entirely the universality of its name. It stands to the credit of ages nicknamed dark that *Universitas*, which originally defined any organised company of persons, should have become definitely attached as a word to societies of learning. In a more commercial age the sacred word might have been conferred on the dry goods store, or on that nebulous form of society euphemistically referred to as a trust. And if indeed a rough and ready definition be required, a medieval University was in its essence a Trust for learning. To what extent Oxford and Cambridge have kept their trust is for others to judge.

The Origin of the Universities

is a point as often discussed as their definition. It is claimed both for Rome and for Greece, but in my opinion it is to Celtic Ireland the debt is owed. A comparison between medieval Oxford and Clonmacnoise in the eighth century makes it clear that the distinctive English system of grouping several colleges within the pale of one University had its ideal counterpart on the banks of the Shannon. At Clonmacnoise different tribes and districts, such as the Royal O'Conors of Connaught, or the Southern Hy Neills, built their private chapels. MacDermots and O'Kellies founded institutions where their souls might be remembered, while Southerners built them one round tower, and the O'Rourkes another, within the same precinct. Very similarly the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge were founded to accommodate different parts of the country or different phases of national life.

Nothing is so striking to visitors as the medieval influences which yet cling to their stones. The old view of life is there enshrined beyond the touch of iconoclast, beyond the path of materialist. The ancient love of learned tranquillity, of books for books' sake, lives on in an atmosphere so undatable that it was said of a certain college, added in the nineteenth century, that if it could be seen without its building it might be taken for medieval, which is certainly laying considerable stress on the use of atmosphere.

In the same spirit of survival so many forgotten beliefs, perished causes, impossible loyalties, legends that were legendary in the Middle Ages even, have accumulated about the crumbling stones. Old heroes have trodden these halls, and young saints have seen visions in their streets. Did not St. Simon Stock meet the Blessed Virgin in Cambridge and St. Edmund Rich set a ring of troth upon her hand at Oxford, until what time as Primate of Canterbury he came to preach the Sixth Crusade?

The Medieval University

was neither feudal nor monastic, it was neither a cloister nor a castle, but it was constituted to combine the privileged piety of the one with the secular strength of the other. It became associated in men's minds with beauty and holiness, and even more so with poverty. It seemed to be a *sedes sapientiae*, a thing both living and divine which they sought out at cost of love and life; and whenever two or three poor scholars were gathered together under a temporary shelter, there arose a hostel, and should one of them grow to be great in after years in Church or State, he would likely endow his ancient garret with wealth and charter, and behold there arose a college.

The spirit in which educational benefactions were made was very different to that in our own time. Colleges were founded not to give startling prominence to some new name or suddenly acquired fortune. By their charters they were simply given over to God for the benefit of His poor clerics and poorer laity, and the founder's name lived only in the prayers with which generations of humble scholars heaped his blissful soul.

But the great Founders, who were they? To take those of Cambridge, for example, they included three Kings of England, three Chancellors of the Realm, one parish priest, two Queens, two bishops, and one local trade union(or, as it was called in those days, a religious guild). At different times no less than six women set up Cambridge foundations, and then, as now, enjoyed the privilege of providing moneys in which they had no subsequent voice.

Several of these colleges came into existence to roof some phase of new thought—to harbor Scholasticism or the Renaissance, or to supply a local need, to those Northerners or Southerners, or Welsh. More than one was erected for Irish clerics.

The medieval student was unique in the history of learning. His life was rough but prayerful, sleeping upon straw, kneeling in Gothic chantries. He rose and studied by moonlight to save candle wax for our Lady. In vacation he worked at the harvest in distant parts, as the poor scholars worked in Ireland. With his wage he paid off his bookseller and professors, as well as the inhabitants of Jewry, who, in the absence of the wealthy fools who crowd universities to-day, were constrained to eke a living out of the learned poor.

As a class, the students combined qualities which to-day are generally distributed between journalists, bibliophiles, and globe-trotters. They traversed Europe unarmed, singing or writing their way. They spoke a common tongue—a jargon of ecclesiastical Latin. They carried Romance and Religion, the latest songs and the newest news, in their wallets. Perhaps their societies were the only freemasonry the Church allowed. They were intellectual cosmopolitans. The only real cosmopolitans Europe has ever known, except, perhaps, in theory the free-traders, and in practice the Esperantists.

They took a vigorous part in the mighty feuds which distracted the Middle Ages. Great abiding quarrels were fought out in the University towns betwixt local and central powers, commons and clergy. Nominalist and Realist, Lollard and Orthodox, Thomist and Scotist, many of which were not merely discussed in the lecture room, but were carried out into the streets and tossed upon the subtler points of sword and rapier.

Greatest of all the faction fights which troubled University life was that raging between Academy and Municipality, between gown and town, a quarrel which would start on small provocation, let an alderman be hustled or a student cheated, but which would bring out armies of townspeople to the boom of St. Martin's, while the bell of Great St. Mary summoned the students to combat the unwarrantable assumptions of the unlearned. After the famous riot of St. Scholastica's Day at Oxford some six and twenty students were left killed and wounded, of whom, needless to say, a majority were of Irish extraction; but their blood was not shed in vain. The impious townsmen were fined by the King and excommunicated by the Bishop, while the University was made everlastingly exempt from City Courts.

Every Historical Movement

found its reflection in University life, whether the clerks of Oxford went to war under Baron and Bishop to win Magna Charta, or to join in the first extinction of the