

Chanticleere



LXVI

Michaelmas Term

1919

We print a letter from a well-known, deeply respected, and intensely honourable member of the College who appeals for a resuscitation of the J.C.M.S. Judging from his letter it seems that he is as keen on a bunch of variety entertainers as anything else, but that is entirely by the way. The whole thing is—those who are *interested* in music are to turn up at the meeting. We don't merely ask those who play to turn up or we'd have a company of five or six. Just come in and give the suggestion a trial. You can't do less. Our hearty good wishes go with the promoters.

There are not many more items to add to this inconclusive drivel that palms itself off as an editorial—so we zoom out of the picture. But—one parting word. Note, ye who have bought this issue—No money returned!

THE EDITOR.

The College in War Time

IT was the second week in August 1914. The few men who were up for the 'Long' were preparing for flight to lake or sea or mountain, and Cambridge was settling down to the two months of torpor, when college courts are silent, porters sleep, and tradesmen offer their wares to townsmen at prices which they deny to undergraduates. War had been declared a week before. We were all in tremulous excitement. Nothing was certainly known. Was it three, four, or five divisions of British troops which were crossing the sea—to France, Belgium, or whither? The only ascertained fact was that Russians, landed at Wick and Thurso, were being rolled through Cambridge station in countless myriads! But they travelled by night in darkened carriages, and the station was strictly closed when they passed. So it seemed that Cambridge was to be altogether outside the trail of war, and somehow we felt that our immunity was a slight to our patriotism. But night and day the Board of Military Studies and the staff of the C.U.O.T.C. sat in Corpus Hall, receiving and forwarding applications for commissions. Most of us helped. At night some snatched moments of repose on the floor. Elderly tutors and professors enrolled

themselves in the O.T.C. and drilled on Jesus Close. Mr. Abbott in khaki looked fiercer than we had known him. Dons yet more elderly patrolled the streets as 'specials.' Everybody else—except Hun spies who were everywhere—slaved for Red Cross in the new lecture rooms.

One day in that second week of August, coming in from a walk, I found a crumpled pencil note awaiting me. It was from General Benson, since killed. He asked permission to put up tents and marquees on the College Close for the staff officers of the 18th Infantry Brigade and officers of the 2nd Durham Light Infantry. I went out to Midsummer Common, and to my amazement found the whole of it covered with tents. Men were lighting fires: food was being cooked: some men were kicking footballs about. I found the General, and he told me this was the 6th Division. They arrived mostly from Scotland that morning. Not only Midsummer Common was occupied. Stourbridge Common, Parker's Piece, and every open space about the town was similarly populated. Horses were tethered along the eastern wall of our Close, on Christ's Piece, along the Grange Road, and elsewhere.

On the night of their arrival the officers of the Durhams messed in Hall with the Fellows—the beginning of much good fellowship. Presently wives followed their husbands to Cambridge, and lodgings filled. Despite the tension of the time, the ill news of the Mons retreat, and rumoured Hun barbarities, it was a happy time—at least for us who were outside the penumbra of war. On four Sundays of glorious August sunshine there were great parade services on our Close—sights and sounds unforgettable—and addresses by the Bishop of Ely, the Dean of Durham, and others.

One day, early in September, Brigadier-General Congreve called on me and asked me for the loan of a Latin dictionary—an odd request at such a time, but the General was an Oxford man, and it might be conjectured that he was cramming Vegetius *De Re Militari*. A few days later came a letter from the General accompanied by a splendid silver gilt cock and globe—the College emblem—with a Latin inscription beneath it, stating that it was the gift of the officers quartered on the

Close, "as a token of gratitude we feel to you for all your kindness, which none of us will ever forget."

And we shall not forget our gallant guests. Almost within twenty-four hours they came to tell us that they had their marching orders. They had been heart-sick at the delay, and great was their relief to find that they were not to be left in England. To us the parting was inexpressibly sad. True, friendly, gentle men, they most of them met the end that they had steadily faced within a month of their departure in the battles on the Aisne.

In October 1914 the College re-assembled about seventy strong. We suffered a greater proportionate diminution in numbers than any college, except perhaps King's and Clare. During the term our ranks were rapidly thinned by further enlistments, and in December we barely totalled forty. And the Roll of Honour began—how our hearts were stricken for the first glorious few—Myddelton, Payne, 'Willoughby' Shields, and David Wilson. Little we foresaw that four years would not see the close of the list, and that many a recent freshman's year was to be far more than decimated.

From hour to hour the scene shifted like the pictures on a cinema film. For a time the cloisters of Nevile's Court at Trinity were used as a hospital for the wounded, and some officers were tended in the Research Hospital on the Hills Road. Belgian refugees flocked into the town—many of them University professors and students—and were hastily housed under any hospitable roof that offered. There was a big reception for them at Jesus Lodge on New Year's Day. In gratitude for the hospitable entertainment of the Jesus crew at Ghent in 1911 a Fund for Belgian Relief was started by Jesus men, and brought in nearly £800. Alas! M. Lippeus, who as President of the Belgian Club should have received and administered the fund, was deported on account of his patriotic energy by the Huns, and only after four years of internment in Germany was able to render thanks to his Jesus friends. The great city known as the First Eastern General Hospital was begun in 1914, and gradually ate up the whole of the King's and Clare cricket ground. The first walking cases among the blue-coats

had the time of their lives. They were motored about the country, and entertained in private houses and cafés, until the authorities thought it wise to impose some limits on Cambridge hospitality. Shall I ever forget the dinner which I shared with the 'Contemptibles' in hospital in August 1916?

In January 1915 came a division of Welsh Territorials, and many of them were billeted in colleges. Wild Wales wreaked on the town the vengeance which it had smothered since the days of Hengist. The Master's courts at Trinity were as Louvain, and Green Street out-did Ypres. Some who were quartered in our boat-house lighted fires on the floor, but failed to burn the place down. The officers of the Cheshire Field Artillery were our guests in Jesus, and good fellows we found them. From this time military services in chapel on Sundays became usual. On Easter Day three hundred attended. Our own services diminished at first to three on week-days, and later on week-day services were given up altogether. The bell and the clock of course were silenced: we groped in darkness about the courts, and blue curtains were put up to obscure the lighted windows of the hall.

Gradually our numbers melted. In June 1918 our complement was a round dozen—most of us 'crocks.' Games of course had long since vanished. The last effort was in Lent 1915, when a Jesus clinker four defeated Trinity Hall by inches. The grass grew high at the boat-houses and on the towpath. Alf Parsons went sorrowfully away to build aeroplanes. Stubbens was drawn into the tide of war. The cricket pitch was woefully neglected, and Mr. Watt lost his occupation and his spirits.

Things became more cheerful with the arrival of the first batch of the cadets. A company of the G.O.C.B. was established in the Chapel Court, and overflowed into K and L staircases. Colonel Cradock and his family occupied North House, as other colonels had done before him. The officers were quartered over the way in Westcott House. How shall I describe the geniality and kindness of officers and men? They gave us concerts and recitations in the Hall, theatricals at the A.D.C., revues at the Guildhall, dances at Westcott House. As each batch left us we were invited to share their parting dinners,

and heartily we bade them God speed. They were of all sorts—Oxford and a tailor's cutter, Eton and a North Sea fisherman, and their ages ranged from 18 to 55; among them an actor, a pressman, several barristers and clergymen. There was generally a professional organist to train the choir and 'preside' on Sundays, and never a deficiency to supply the Dean's place after Dr. Foakes-Jackson took wing to America. The cadets rolled and mowed the cricket field. Football and cricket revived. Mr. Watt became gay, and though Mr. Duke's Board unfavourably controlled his hospitalities, he never lacked cheerful company—nor they. The river was alive again with racing eights, and the Headship was contested, I think, eleven times in two years and a half, and—as is recorded on a challenge 'pot' which the cadets kindly bequeathed to the College—the Jesus cadets won the place not less than six times, which, with other things, made these Jesus men—who could deny them the name?—extraordinarily proud and boastful of their college; and wonderful tales of their Jesus days they will have to tell the generation that comes after them.

Then Armistice Day—so recent that a few veterans among us can remember how we silenced St. Mary's bells, and broke the windows of the *Cambridge Magazine*—happy editors who so cheaply earned the reward of their ardent patriotism and prudent pacificism. Was it all very foolish, or was it Wisdom that cried in our streets for joy that one old wickedness was dead, and that the Dayspring had visited England from on high? And along with the clanging of the bells and the roaring of the crowd, there were memories, more tender than sad, of faces and voices from a happy past, and some present visions of rude crosses in other lauds—France, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli . . . where not?

A. G.
