

Oct. 16. 1914

My dear Burnell,

You have sent me far too much and I have half a mind to send it back especially in these times of distress. However I must just determine to pay you back someday when one of your institutions asks for money. I've got swag to pay for the repairs which is something though after Aug 31st I had to stop any more appeals and it doesn't look as if I should dare to ask for money again for many a long day.

You can dimly imagine far away in India the kind of time we are living through here. As I write the newspaper boys are crying the loss of another cruiser - the Hawke - and I've just heard privately of the destruction of a Zeppelin not very far from London. Here in Oxford we have been obliged to put out most of our lights after dark and we dodge in luminous gloom motor-buses and R.A.M.C. motor cars. The Schools have been turned into a military hospital with over 500 beds filled at present largely with Belgian wounded. Ch. Ch. Kells, Exeter and New College are mostly military barracks. There are about a third of the usual number of undergraduates in residence and most of these are training with the Officers' Training Corps and will vanish at Christmas or Easter. Yesterday I presented a man for a degree. High boots & spurs khaki and a Communion gown on top were quite a common costume and one Dean at least (Stanning) wore a similar military dress surmounted by an academical habit. The Parks are filled with OTC men Territorials, and Kitchener's Army drilling. At Hatfield 7 of our Senior Common Room (including 4 Tutors and the Chaplain) are serving with the Colours and I am back to Greats work and Pass Ethics again as though I had never blossomed into a Head.

But we are not downbeaten and it is extraordinary to live in days when everyone is of a single mind. Though I always thought the modern undergraduate one of the best fellows in the world I never realised the essential fibre of him till the war. Day after day they lounged up to Oxford in August from sometimes the ends of the earth. 'Hallo what are you up to?' 'O I just came up to see if I could do anything to deal with these German gentlemen. And if he couldn't get a commission he went into barracks to join his Scout or anybody else from anywhere as a Tommy. We've already sent 1300 of them as Officers into the Army and if they haven't had much training they are all and all prepared as our Hatfield Porter remarked 'to die like gentlemen'. But sometimes it is rather heartrending work encouraging them to go. And financially it is a black look out for the University. Kells and possibly Pembroke will have to close down at the end of the year unless the war is over or the public comes to their assistance. Tutors' salaries are being

ST EDWARD HALL
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doctored 25 per cent. Several colleges are having meals in common. The University will be hopelessly in debt. And when we learn the extent to which our incomes will be taxed, I don't suppose that many people will in the next few years be able to afford a university education for their sons. As for the progress of the war I don't suppose I know any more than you, possibly less. But we shall stick it out, and I've great faith in the British soldier & the Navy. Probably money will tell in the end and the German madness can't last for ever. Some of them must awaken to the truth at last.

We were at Stratthpaffer when I was trying to cure the rheumatism in my eye when the first signs of trouble began. We had intended trying to pay a visit to your wife in our way home but as soon as things grew serious I had to hurry back to Oxford. We crossed the Forth Bridge on the Sunday. It was guarded by 4 long towers and an encampment of soldiers. I shall never forget the Sunday night in Edinburgh, the throes excitement and unreal quiet in the streets, the news that the battleships in the Forth were all cleared for action and the final news that Germany had declared war on Russia. Few people in England slept well that night and Grey's speech next day came as a great relief. Anyhow the nation's honour was safe. We left Edinburgh for York in a train packed with reservists and the next few days at Poppleton trains were thundering all day & night over the bridge as the army & territorial units mobilized. Now we've got more or less used to it all, don't believe any of the rumours (the Russian myth was the most universal) and though we think and breathe nothing but war it seems almost natural. I've got about 33 men up, not bad for our little place. We were to have had a second set of Freshmen, 314 in all, and out of them I've bagged 17, including a Royal Prince of Siam. But 5 of them may be summoned by the War Office at the end of term.

You will gather from the kind of script I'm writing that my eyes are better. They were a long time getting better but Stratthpaffer did the trick, though I've still got a very rheumaticky aching shoulder. I hear that my father is getting on favourably but I want to see for myself before long. Randle has turned up and will be here for some time reading Sanskrit. He has as much Oriental imperturbability as ever but I've only seen him for a few minutes. He's dining with us soon however. My father hasn't been over well and is a good deal older. I am becoming a member of that august body the Hebdomadal Council and if the Head of a Hall could hold that office I should doubtless be Vice-Chancellor in a year or two. I suit it well to think of! and it seems only yesterday since we were undergraduates. Now I must stop and get this to the post. I wonder if it will reach you or be snuffed up by the Evidens.

Yours ever
A H Williams
My wife sends her very kind regards.

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