

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please check with an FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **If the book is under copyright in your country, do not download or redistribute this file.**

Title: Oxford and the War: XII from "Faith, War and Policy"

Date of first publication: 1916

Author: Gilbert Murray (1866-1957)

Date first posted: September 20 2012

Date last updated: September 20 2012

Faded Page eBook #20120921

This ebook was produced by: James Wright, Jen Haines & the Online Distributed Proofreading Canada Team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

(This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive/American Libraries.)

XII

OXFORD AND THE WAR

A MEMOIR OF ARTHUR GEORGE HEATH, FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, AND LIEUTENANT IN THE SIXTH BATTALION, ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT

(September, 1916)

THERE are perhaps no institutions in England whose response to the requirements of the war has been more swift, or whose sacrifice more intense and enduring, than the two ancient universities. Not, indeed, that it is very profitable to measure the comparative sacrifices of those who give their all. If these two mothers gave without hesitation, so, of course, did many others. But these two had, in the nature of things, a gift to offer which strikes the onlooker as richer than most, more brilliant, more pathetic, more inevitably suggesting the idea, by all worldly standards, of incalculable and heroic waste.

Men of many kinds and many different natures have gone out of Oxford, to return thither only as a memory and an inscribed stone. But perhaps the two classes that have most touched the imagination are those who stand, from the academic point of view, at the extremities of the scale.

On one side the more or less idle and wealthy men to whom the university had been something nearer to an athletic or social club than a place of study, and whose lives had often seemed to be little more than an expression of irresponsible youth, if not a mere selfish pursuit of pleasure.

It was a surprise to many of us to see how, when the need came, there was found in these men an unsuspected strenuousness and gravity. The power, it would seem, had always been there; but to call it forth needed a stronger stimulus than the ordinary motives of well-to-do English life. And many an Oxford teacher must have begun to revise his general estimate of human nature when he heard the later history of various undergraduates over whom he had hitherto shrugged despairing shoulders; what hardships they faced without a murmur, what care they took of their men's health and comfort, how they had shown themselves capable, not only of dying gallantly, but of shouldering grave and incessant responsibilities without a lapse.

And at the other end of the scale were men almost the opposite in character: students selected from all the schools of the kingdom for their intellectual powers, men whose ideals of life were gentle, to whom Oxford was above all things a place of study and meditation, where they could live again through the great thoughts of past generations and draw from them light for the understanding of truth or help for the bettering of human life in the future.

These men, unlike the first, were accustomed normally to live for their duty, and their duty hitherto had lain along quiet and rather austere paths. It had led them towards industry and idealism and the things of the intellect; also, no doubt, towards the ordinary habits of manliness and good temper which make life in a community pleasant. Those of them especially who had joined the tutorial staff of some college had it as a large part of their daily business to think for others, to practise constant sympathy and understanding, to be the friend of every pupil who came to them, and to have no enemies.

And on these men there fell suddenly a new duty; the same as the old, perhaps, in its ultimate justification, but certainly in its concrete expression the most violent opposite of all they had hitherto thought right. They were called abruptly to a life in which their old attainments and virtues, as it seemed, were not wanted, their standard of manners somewhat out of place, their gentleness and modesty almost a positive disqualification; while activities were suddenly demanded of them which they had never practised and which, for all anyone knew, might be entirely foreign to their

natures. And here, too, there came to the onlooker a somewhat awed surprise, to see how the same inward power which had shaped these men's previous lives was ready for its new task. They adapted themselves. They found how to use their brains in a field that was strange to them. They learnt to command instead of persuading or suggesting, but still turned their experience in handling pupils and classes to advantage for the leading and shaping of their platoons. They proved themselves able to endure fatigues and dangers outside all the range of their previous imagination, and even, what must to many have been a more profoundly hateful task, to study carefully how to inflict the maximum of injury upon the men in the trenches opposite. They would never in normal life have been soldiers, yet they brought some great gifts to their soldiering. After all, there are very few fields of life where a keen intelligence is not apt to be useful, or where habits of duty and sympathy and understanding are not very valuable things.

It was to this class that Arthur Heath most typically belonged; and in trying to write of him one feels how much easier it would be to describe a man of the other type. The other type makes such an obvious picture; the young man who "cuts" his lectures and is misunderstood by his dons, who neglects his mere books because his heart is in romance or adventure or thoughts of war; the man of dominant will and stormy passions, or of reckless daring and happy-go-lucky lawlessness, who is always in trouble till he rises to the call of need and becomes a hero. The Idle Apprentice always forms a better picture than the Industrious Apprentice, and his life is more interesting to read.

To make a man's story clear one needs achievements, and to describe him vividly one seems to need some characteristic weaknesses. But the men of whom I write were very young, and had lived so far a life with little external achievement, only the achievements of high thinking and feeling, of quiet tasks well done and generous duties well carried through: a life with plenty in it to command admiration and love, but nothing to make a story about. And as for characteristic weaknesses, I suppose these men had them, being human; but I should find it hard to name Arthur Heath's weaknesses, and they were certainly not picturesque enough to be remembered. One remembers these men by slight things; by a smile, a look of the eyes, a way of sitting or walking; by a sudden feeling about some chance incident—"I should like to talk that over with Heath," or, "How Heath would have laughed at that!" But such things can hardly be communicated, any more than the sense of loss or loneliness can. One can only say: these young men were beautiful spirits and of high promise; they lived a sheltered though strenuous life, partly devoted to high intellectual studies and ideal interests, partly to that borderland of social work in which hard thinking and brotherly love go hand in hand; then, when the call came, they stepped instantly out into a world of noise and mire, worked and laughed and suffered with their fellow men, and, like them, died for their country.

A slight story in any case, and in Arthur Heath's perhaps slighter than in most. The mere annals of his life have comparatively little interest. As is said by one who knew him especially well, they are summed up in the phrase, "Like boy, like man." It is a singularly uniform story of quiet industry and strength, a very gentle, affectionate, and modest nature, extraordinary powers of intellect and a rather individual but irrepressible sense of humour.

He was born in London on October 8, 1887, and was educated at the Grocers' Company's School, of which he always spoke very highly, and which certainly seems to have had the power of turning out thoughtful men. He rose through the various forms with surprising rapidity, excelling at almost everything he touched. He was very good at such sports as running, swimming, and shooting; he delighted in natural scenery and country walks, and he showed an especial gift for music. In December, 1904, he obtained an Open Classical Scholarship at New College, Oxford, and came into residence in October of the next year. It so happened that I had just returned to Oxford and New College myself that term, after an absence of sixteen years, and was told, I remember, that I should have two particularly good pupils to teach—the senior Winchester Scholar, Leslie Hunter, and the Open Scholar, Heath, from some London school. They both abundantly justified the description. They ran each other close for the great university distinctions, remained friends and colleagues, and died not very far apart on the Western front.

I remember finding Heath waiting in my study, a slender, delicately made freshman, very young-looking, dark, with regular features and great luminous eyes; rather silent and entirely gentle and unassuming. A freshman from a London school is apt to be a little "out of it" at first; he is surrounded by boys from Winchester, Eton, Rugby, and the other great public schools, who have old schoolfellows by the score scattered about the university, and whose ordinary habits and manners, virtues and weaknesses, form the average standard of the place. Heath's gentleness immediately inclined most people to like him, while his brains obviously commanded respect; but he was always reserved and did not quickly become well known in college. He struck one in his first terms as living an intense inner life of watching and thinking, observing and weighing, and making up his mind quietly on a multitude of subjects, while quite refusing to be bullied or hurried. He had not had as much training in Greek and Latin composition as the best boys from the great schools, a fact

which just prevented him from getting the two blue-ribbons of scholarship, the Hertford and Ireland. But he came second for both, and obtained a Craven Scholarship in 1906 and a First Class in Moderations in 1907 and in Greats in 1909, after which he was immediately elected a Fellow of New College.

Before settling down to his teaching work he travelled for a year in France and Germany, attending the Universities of Paris and Berlin, and visiting Leipzig, Munich, Heidelberg, and other places. His chief interests at this time, apart from music, were philosophy and social reform. He had expected much from the French Socialists and the German philosophers, and his letters to me seem to show that both expectations were disappointed. His accounts of the struggles of advanced French politicians are more amusing than respectful, and he could not find the relief and edification that Jean Christophe found in the religious enthusiasm of the votaries of violence. On the other hand, he conceived both respect and warm affection for individual Frenchmen; he was keenly interested in the theatres, and greatly admired the work of certain French philosophers. In Germany his experience was similar to that of so many English students. He was disappointed in the teaching of the universities, though he rather admired the actual lecturing. He was quite surprised at what seemed to him the decadence of German philosophy. He thought that its highly professional and technical character led its professors to multiply systems and interest themselves in system-building rather than to look freshly at the facts they had to study; and that quite often some criticism of indurated error which had come to be a commonplace in Oxford was unsuspected or hailed as a new discovery in the German schools. He was amused, too, and somewhat bored at the self-conscious insistence on German *Kultur*, with which his ears were inundated; the word was still unfamiliar to most Englishmen at that time. And he wrote me a serious and perturbed warning, as to a fellow friend of peace, about the anger against England and the inclination towards war which he found widespread in Germany. Neither he nor I, he considered, had at all realized the strength of these feelings. On the other hand, he was favourably impressed by the strength and discipline of the German Socialists, especially in the south, and the general reasonableness of their political action. He had always loved German music, and he revelled in the mediæval towns and the vestiges of the simple life of old Germany.

When he returned to Oxford, he took up his regular work as a Greats tutor, lecturing mostly on modern philosophy, especially on various branches of political speculation. He took, on the one hand, such subjects as "Sensation, Imagery, and Thought" and "The Psychological Account of Knowledge"; and, on the other, "Laissez Faire," "Modern Socialism," "Socialist Criticisms and Socialist Remedies." During these four years he was building up a great position of quiet influence as a tutor. Good pupils are apt to repay richly whatever effort a tutor spends upon them, but I have seldom heard such warm language of friendship and admiration as from certain of Heath's pupils when they talked about him.

It is curious to notice that, at this time, when his work was so strikingly successful and his ship had been happily brought to port, he began, for the first time in my knowledge of him, to be uneasy and discontented. It is a phenomenon often visible in the best of the young tutors at Oxford, and is connected with the very quality which makes them inspiring as teachers. It is not that they do not enjoy their work and their pupils. They do both. But their interests overflow the bounds of their activities. They pine for a field of work with more life in it, a wider outlook and more prospect of effectiveness, a horizon less limited by examinations and routine and the constant training of undeveloped minds. Still more, perhaps, it is the moral trouble that besets all purely intellectual workers, the difficulty of maintaining faith in the value of your own work. Even if Heath had been able to know what his pupils and colleagues thought of him and said of him among themselves, he would probably have suspected that they were merely exaggerating. But of course, as a rule, men do not hear these things. Friends cannot openly pay one another compliments.

To Heath, so far as he discussed the matter with me, no definite alternative really presented itself. His life was very varied in its interests. Besides his personal studies and the work with his pupils, he derived intense pleasure from his piano, and took an active part in the musical life at Oxford. He would often go out to one of the Oxfordshire villages and play classical music to the village people. He was also, during his last two years of residence, one of the university members on the Board of Guardians, where his care and good judgement were greatly valued, and the contact with practical life and concrete economic problems opened to him a new vista of interest. He refused to stand for a certain provincial professorship, which would have given him a larger income and more leisure, coupled with less congenial work and less advanced pupils. At one time he hankered after the profession of medicine, the one form of intellectual work whose utility is as plain as a pikestaff. Sometimes, again, he rebelled at the idea of always teaching men who had such abundance of good teaching already, and wished to devote himself entirely to the "W.E.A."

This society, whose initials stand for "Workers' Educational Association," has exercised a great fascination over the best minds of Oxford for the last ten years or so. Wherever a class of working-men chose to gather together and ask for a

trained university graduate to teach them and to read and discuss their essays, the organization tried to provide an Oxford or Cambridge man, and as a matter of fact usually managed to send one of the best and most invigorating of the younger teachers in the place. Most of the classes were conducted in the town where the working-men happened to live, but arrangements were also made by which picked men came to Oxford. The success of the movement, from an educational point of view, has been nothing less than extraordinary; and, considering the miserable pay and the discomforts of the teacher's life, the devotion with which dozens of brilliant young men have thrown themselves into the tutorial work has been a credit to human nature.

One of Heath's W.E.A. pupils, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, wrote to a friend: "It was Mr. Heath's influence in our talks together (more especially in Oxford) on philosophy that had a most profound effect, I hope for good, on my character, but at any rate on my course of life, opinions, and actions. Nothing I know of has had so much effect, and on the whole brought so much real happiness....I almost loved that man, so you will forgive the tone of this letter if it appears strange."

Early in 1914 his friends were surprised to see the announcement that Heath had been awarded the Green Moral Philosophy Prize for a treatise on "Personality"; the book will, I hope, be published at the end of the war. He had not told most of his friends that he was writing at all; and I remember that some of us amused ourselves by writing him pretended letters of congratulation from various celebrities who were popularly supposed to be guilty of "personality" in their political speeches, and who offered or requested suggestions for its more effective use. He detected us, of course, and wrote to me shortly afterwards: "It is my painful duty to inform you that the police have tracked to your house three letters which have recently been delivered to me containing illicit threats and improper comments on a question of public interest. Willingly as I acquit you of any personal share in the matter...it is not right that Innocence and Respectability—as found in my pupils and my scout—should be exposed to even a remote chance of such contamination"—as these letters apparently contained. He threatened prosecution, but would be content if the criminals left the university.

I used during these years to see a great deal of him, and had the custom of lunching on Tuesdays, after a twelve-o'clock lecture, with him and his colleague G. L. Cheesman, a young historian. Cheesman knew all about the army of the Roman Empire, and the history of various separate legions, and had travelled in Dalmatia and the Balkans. He was a man of generous and brilliant mind, an inspiring and vivid personality. Cheesman loved argument, and Heath and I loved Cheesman. And we differed enough in opinion to keep up a constant guerrilla warfare on all kinds of political and intellectual topics. In politics, Cheesman affected the part of a wide-awake, progressive Tory, while Heath and I were content to be dull, old-fashioned Radicals. On other subjects, of course, the divisions were different.

I think it was on August 7, 1914, three days after the declaration of war, when I had just returned from London, that I had a call on the telephone from Heath, proposing himself to dinner, and telling me that he and Cheesman had both applied for commissions. The summons had come, and both men, so different in tastes and opinions, though alike in idealism, had responded to it together. They had taken about two days to think the matter thoroughly out. Heath came up to our house that evening, and one or two other men also. And we talked over the war, and Grey's speech, and the resistance of Liège; and the imminence of danger to France; and the relative strength of the British and German fleets; and then of our German friends and the times we had stayed in various parts of Germany. Later on Heath sat down to the piano and played French music, Hungarian music, and, lastly, German music, and the company sang German songs as a kind of farewell, and he and his friends walked back to college.

He went first to train at Churn, near Oxford. Then he obtained a commission in the Sixth Battalion of the Royal West Kent Regiment, his home at this time being in Bromley, and joined his regiment at a swampy camp in the southeastern counties, whose amusing discomforts and oddities he described in many letters. "No self-respecting cow," I remember, "would graze in such a place." I refrain from mentioning the various camps where he was stationed, and the special forms of training he went through. It is enough that he became at last wearily impatient to go out to France. There were frequent rumours of a move: at one time hopes were roused by the prospect of a special inspection by a distinguished and corpulent veteran "who is being moved to-morrow night by mechanical transport from E.... for that purpose." He opined that "Italy and Kitchener's Army will remain neutral till the end of the war." One comfort was that "Our Adjutant, in whom I have every confidence, informs us that within three months we shall all be knocked out." This letter ends with a postscript: "In the last stages of our twenty-seven-mile march I heard one man ask another if there was a parade the next morning. 'Yes,' was the answer; 'half-past-four. Top-hats and bathing drawers.'"

At last, on May 31, 1915, I received the following note: "All military movements must be executed with profound secrecy, and known to no one except the population of Aldershot, the station-masters on the southern lines, the British mercantile marine, and the friends and relatives of the few thousand men concerned. Therefore, all I can say to you at this crisis is, *Vive la France! Vive l'Armée de Kitchener! Conspuez Northcliffe!*"

This cheery tone ran through almost all his letters, and was borne out by the vigorous gait and sun-browned skin which one saw on his occasional visits to Oxford. Military training improved his physical health and cheerfulness. He complained that his intellect had become dormant, but it was not so. He read a good deal and thought vigorously. He had at first, like all thoughtful Englishmen, a feeling of utter horror at the prospect of European war, and an uneasy suspicion that, however necessary it might be, now at the last moment, for England to fight, surely our policy for many years back must have been somewhere dreadfully at fault. The White Paper was the first thing to reassure him; then came the study of earlier questions; and in the end he felt confidence in the wisdom and good faith of British diplomacy since 1904, and conceived in particular a great admiration for Sir Edward Grey. "It seems to me," he wrote me once in a time of sorrow, "that most people's chief consolation for the loss of their friends now is just the sense of the absolute rightness of what they have done and the way they died."

Like a true soldier, he was always angry at what he considered to be slanders of the enemy. He detested atrocity-mongers, and for a time disbelieved the stories of German cruelties in Belgium. When the Bryce Report was published and the evidence became too strong, he was convinced. But he never spoke of these subjects, and the only reference to them which I can find in his letters is a short and unexplained sentence: "It seems that the Germans have taken to torturing their prisoners." I think that with him, as with others who had joined the army at the same time, this "sense of the absolute rightness of what they had done" became stronger as time passed. But, to the end, his letters find room for mockery of the anti-German mania of the more vulgar press, and of the old ladies who knew on unimpeachable authority that this or that eminent and august person was a "Potsdammer" or a convicted spy.

His campaigning in France lay through a period of discouragement to the British cause. The Russians had met their great defeat on the Dunajec before he left England, and continued steadily to retreat during the whole period. This great disaster reacted upon our fortunes everywhere. The Gallipoli expedition, on which Heath had pinned his most confident hopes, first dragged and then slowly failed; the final disappointment at Suvla Bay took place on August 15. On September 25 the great Allied offensive in Champagne and towards Loos began with terrific carnage and large success, but the losses were too severe and the difficulties ahead increased too fast to permit of the advance being continued. During September it had become more clear than ever that the Allies could not expect any armed help from America, and by the first weeks of October the Kings of Bulgaria and Greece had apparently made up their minds that our cause was safely lost. Venizelos was dismissed; Serbia betrayed by her ally and invaded by her enemies.

Meanwhile Heath's own health was not very good. He had an attack of some sort of blood-poisoning, which was at first taken for scarlet fever. On July 21 he was wounded in the scalp by a splinter of shell, while resting in billets, and insisted on returning to work before it was healed. He remained unwell for some time afterwards. Still he found a constant interest in the care of his platoon, and a great pleasure in the men's affection. His letters remain steadily cheerful. Discomforts, when mentioned at all, are always treated humorously. He describes one of his men who had just written an indignant letter about "them shirkers at home" enjoying themselves, "while we are bearing the blunt"; and explains that his own platoon at this moment is "bearing the blunt" by lying in the sun asleep or playing cards in a beautiful rose-garden. Another time he has just been so bold as to give a clean shirt to a major; "rather like giving a bun to an elephant." Graver misfortunes are met in the same way: "The poor old Grand Duke seems to be well on his way to Nijni-Novgorod." Now and again comes a sudden blaze of anger against the grouse and backbiters at home: "What I should really like would be to go down Fleet Street with a machine-gun." Just once or twice comes a sentence revealing, like a flash of light on an abyss, the true horror of the things he did not speak about: "These are days when men should be born without mothers."

Like nearly all thoughtful men he was often troubled beforehand by the doubt whether his courage and endurance would stand the strain of real war. However, at the very beginning he distinguished himself by a solitary scouting expedition in which he discovered a German listening-post, and, later on, the only thing that seems to have disturbed him much was the nerve-racking effect of the gigantic artillery. He wished "the great bullies of guns" would go away, and leave the infantry to settle the war in a nice clean manner. "If I had my way I should bar out every weapon but the rifle; and even then," he adds, "I should prefer brickbats at three quarters of a mile." In the middle of August his most intimate friend in the company, Saumarez Mann, was very badly wounded while cutting grass in front of the parapet. Mann was

still an undergraduate at Balliol, and Heath's letters convey echoes of the chaff that passed between the two friends. "Mann always makes me laugh; he is so big," says one; while another orders with care a box of chocolates for Mann's twenty-first birthday. Fortunately Mann's wound proved not to be mortal. Early in September came a greater blow, the news of G. L. Cheesman's death at Gallipoli. There was probably not a man in the army who was more vividly conscious than he of all that Constantinople meant in history or more thrilled by the prospect of fighting for its recovery.

At last, on October 8, the end came. It was Heath's twenty-eighth birthday. The battalion held a series of trenches in front of Vermelles, across the Hulluch road, in that stretch of ghastly and shell-tortured black country which we now think of as the Loos Salient. For the whole day there had been an intense German bombardment, tearing and breaking the trenches, and presumably intended to lead up to a general infantry attack. It was decided, in order to prevent this plan developing, that the Sixth Battalion should attempt an attack on the enemy at "Gun Trench." This was a very difficult enterprise in itself, and doubly so to troops already worn by a long and fierce bombardment. The charge was made by "A" Company about 6.30 and beaten back. It was followed by a series of bombing attacks, for which a constant supply of bombs had to be kept up across the open. It was during this work that Arthur Heath fell, shot through the neck. He spoke once, to say, "Don't trouble about me," and died almost immediately.

The whole operation was finely carried out. It failed to take Gun Trench, but it seems to have paralyzed the attacking power of the enemy. And the Official Report states that the commander "considered that the 6th R.W. Kents and 7th E. Surrey showed fine military qualities in undertaking an attack after such a bombardment continued throughout the day." As for Arthur Heath himself, his platoon sergeant wrote to his parents: "It will console you to know that a braver man never existed. Some few minutes before he met his death I heard the exclamation: 'What a man! I would follow him anywhere!' These few words express the opinion of every one who came into contact with him, and we all feel proud to have had the honour of serving under him." Another friend, who knew him but slightly, wrote: "I can only think of him as one who has left a track of light behind."

Four New College scholars of exceptional intellect and character entered the university in 1905 and obtained Firsts in their Final Schools in 1909—Arthur Heath, Leslie Hunter, R. C. Woodhead, and Philip Brown. And now all four lie buried on the Western front. Each, of course, had his special character and ways and aims; but to one who knew them well, there comes from all of them a certain uniform impression, the impression of an extraordinary and yet unconscious high-mindedness. It is not merely that they were clever, hard-working, conscientious, honourable, lovers of poetry and beauty; the sort of men who could never be suspected of evading a duty or, say, voting for their own interest rather than the common good. It was, I think, that the standards which had become the normal guides of life to them were as a matter of plain fact spiritual standards, and not of the world nor the flesh. The University of Oxford has doubtless a thousand faults, and the present writer would be the last to palliate them; but it has, by some strange secret of its own, preserved through many centuries the power of training in its best men a habit of living for the things of the spirit. Its philosophy is broad and always moving; it is rooted in no orthodoxy, and the chief guide of its greatest school is Hellenism, not scholasticism. Yet it keeps always living, in generation after generation of its best students, a tone of mind like that of some cassocked clerk of the Middle Ages, whose mental life would shape itself into two aims: in himself to glorify God by the pursuit of knowledge, and among his fellow men to spread the spirit of Christ.

Such language may sound strained as applied to a group of men who were earning their living amongst us in perfectly ordinary ways, as teachers, writers, doctors, civil servants, some of them in the law or in business; but it implies nothing strained or specially high-strung in the quality of their daily lives. There is always a religion of some sort at the root of every man's living. Every man is either willing or not willing to sacrifice himself to something which he feels to be higher than himself, though if he is sensible, he will probably not talk much about it. And men of conscience and self-mastery are fully as human, as varied, and as interesting as any weaklings or picturesque scoundrels are.

Perhaps the first thing that struck one about Arthur Heath was his gentleness and modesty. "It was fine," says one of his superior officers at Churn camp, "to see a first-rate intellect such as his applied to a practical matter that was strange to him. And he was so modest about himself, and never dreamed how we all admired him." The last words strike one as exactly true. Another quality was his affectionateness, or rather the large space that affection occupied in his mind. Affection, indeed, is too weak a term to describe the feeling that seems to glow behind the words of many of his letters home; for instance, the beautiful letter to his mother, written on July 11, about the prospect of death. He was a devoted

son and brother, interested in every detail of home life, and not forgetting the family birthdays. And the same quality pervaded much of his relations towards friends and acquaintances. He was the sort of man whom people confide in, and consult in their troubles.

He was a bold thinker; he held clear opinions of his own on all sorts of subjects. He often differed from other people, especially from people in authority. Yet he was never for a moment bitter or conceited or anxious to contradict. There was no scorn about him; and his irrepressible sense of fun, so far from being unkind, had an element of positive affection in it.

In comparing him with other men who have fought and fallen in this war, I feel that one of his most marked characteristics was his instinct for understanding. In the midst of strong feeling and intense action his quiet, penetrating intelligence was always at work. Even at the front, where most men become absorbed in their immediate job, he was full of strategical problems, of the war as a whole and the effect of one part of it on another, of home politics, and the influences he believed to be baneful or salutary. His courage was like that of the Brave Man in Aristotle, who knows that a danger is dangerous, and fears it, but goes through with it because he knows that he ought. He liked to understand what he was doing. He was ready, of course, to obey without question, but he would then know that he was obeying without question. He was ready to give his life and all the things that he valued in life, his reading and music and philosophy, but he liked to know what he was giving them for. After a study of the causes of the war, he writes from France: "One of the few things in all these intrigues and ambitions that can be considered with pleasure is the character of Sir Edward Grey...I am very puzzled about home politics; cannot understand the Welsh miners or the Coalition, and feel all convictions shaken except a profound belief in Mr. Asquith."

After his first wound: "Fear is a very odd thing. When I was up in the trenches about thirty yards from them [the enemy], I got over the parapet and crawled out to examine a mine-crater without anything worse than a certain amount of excitement. But when we are back here [in Brigade Reserve] and the shells start screaming over, I feel thoroughly afraid, and there is no denying it." A superior officer once warned him not to think so highly of his men: he should accept it as a fact that "these men are damned stupid, and what's more, they're not anxious to do more than they can help." Heath bowed to the officer's superior knowledge; yet he did think he found in even the less promising men a certain intelligence and keenness: "In fact I am like the man who tried to be a philosopher, but found that cheerfulness *would* break in."

He never groused about hardships, nor yet about the evils of war. The war was something he had to carry through, and he would make the best of it until it killed him. He realized the horror of a war of attrition, and the true nature of these days when "men should be born without mothers." Yet he took considerable interest in numerical calculations about the length of time that would be necessary, at the existing rate of wastage, to make the German line untenable. And his calculations always pointed towards the certainty of our ultimate victory. When a phrase of poignant pathos occurs in the letters, it is never by his own intention. Thus, in speaking of some particular operation of trench warfare he writes: "Gillespie taught it to me, and now I am teaching Geoffrey Smith." Gillespie, Heath, Geoffrey Smith; it was in that order, too, that they taught one another a greater lesson. A. D. Gillespie died a brave death in September, 1915, Heath in October of the same year, and Geoffrey Smith in the July following. But the full tragedy underlying the words can be realized only by one who knew those three rare spirits.

A wonderful band of scholars it was that went out in these days from William of Wykeham's old foundation, young men quite exceptional in intellectual powers, in feeling for the higher values of life, in the sense of *noblesse oblige*, and in loving-kindness towards the world of men. The delicate feeling which forms the foundation of scholarship was in them not a mere function of the intellect, but a grace pervading all their human relations. No grossness or graspingness ever found a foothold in them, no germ of that hate which rejoices to believe evil and to involve good things with bad. Heath played his beloved German music the night before he left Oxford. Cheesman's latest letter to me was a defence of the Turks in Gallipoli from some misconception which he thought was in my mind. Woodhead, waiting to advance under machine-gun fire and knowing that the first man to rise would be a certain victim, chose carefully the right moment and rose first. The only words that Philip Brown spoke after he was mortally wounded were words of thought and praise for his servant. Leslie Hunter, on the day before he died, spoke to a friend of his presentiment that death was coming, and then lay for a while in a grassy meadow, singing, "*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai.*"

While I was writing these lines came the news of another of the band, a most brilliant young scholar and historian, Leonard Butler, together with his colonel's statement in the "Times" notice: "I never saw a finer death." And this morning, as I revise them, yet another: not indeed a member of this group, since he was older and had already achieved

fame on a wider field of action, but one whom I think of still as a young Wykehamist undergraduate and Ireland Scholar, by nature and fortune perhaps the most richly gifted of all, and as swift as any to give up to the cause that summoned him all the shining promise of his life—Raymond Asquith.

One after another, a sacrifice greater than can be counted, they go; and will go until the due end is won.

At the close of the Michaelmas Term of 1914 there was a memorial service at New College, as in other colleges, for those of its members who had fallen in the war. It seemed a long list even then, though it was scarcely at its beginning. And those who attended the service will not forget the sight of the white-haired warden, full of blameless years, kneeling before the altar on the bare stones, and praying that it might be granted to us, the survivors, to live such lives as these young men who had gone before us. His words interpreted, I think, the unconscious feeling of most of those who heard him. It certainly changes the whole aspect of the world, even to a man whose life is advanced and his character somewhat set, when the men who were his intimate friends are proved to have had in them, not merely the ordinary virtues and pleasantnesses of common life, but something high and resplendent which one associates with the stories of old saints or heroes; still more when there is burned into him the unforgettable knowledge that men whom he loved have died for him.

[The end of *Oxford and the War: XII from "Faith, War and Policy"* by Gilbert Murray]