

**FREDERICK GOODYEAR,  
LETTERS AND  
REMAINS, 1887-1917**

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Frederick Goodyear, letters and remains, 1887-1917 by Frederick Goodyear

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FREDERICK GOODYEAR—1913.

# FREDERICK GOODYEAR

## LETTERS AND REMAINS

1887 - 1917

*Primitiæ juvenis miseræ bellique propinqui  
Dura rudimenta et nulli exaudita deorum  
Vota precesque meæ*

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## FOREWORD

FREDERICK GOODYEAR was born on the 5th March 1887 at Fallow Corner, North Finchley, then almost a country district, surrounded by open fields and woodlands which had not yet been swept away by the advancing fringe of the metropolis. He came of middle-class stock. His father was the proprietor of a sufficiently prosperous coal business; but he has never allowed business to monopolise his attention, and for many years he has taken an active part in the public life of the district and the county. In politics a Liberal of the Gladstonian school, he combines a ripe and kindly judgment with a shrewd independence of mind, all too rare in present times. Many traits in Frederick's character were obviously derived from his father: a mother's influence is less easily defined. Frederick's mother was of Celtic extraction, and from her he probably drew the vein of imagination which coloured and inspired the keen intellectual gifts he inherited from his father. There grew up with him an elder sister, to whom many of his most intimate letters were addressed, and a younger brother Geoffrey, who served first in the Yeomanry, and later, with a commission, in the Machine Gun Corps, and who has gone through the whole war unscathed.

In the atmosphere of such a home Frederick passed a happy and healthy boyhood. Till the age of fifteen, he was educated privately, first by Miss Shouits of Finchley and later at Christ's College, Finchley. He was at that time a sturdily built and powerful boy, with a tendency to voluble argument (stimulated, perhaps, by the *Westminster Gazette*, of which he was, even at that age, a 'constant reader'); but equally prone to relapse into abrupt and impenetrable silences. His physical features were literally dominated by an exuberant growth of thick, curly, dark-brown hair, in whose matted thatch he once boasted that a fair-sized pebble had been found securely lodged. He was already an omnivorous and unprincipled reader of books: but he was quite as fond of long, and usually solitary, rambles in the country, and of the cricket field, where he soon showed more than average proficiency. During this period he made a lasting friendship with one of his masters, Mr. H. T. Evans (now Capt. Evans, M.D.).



at whose home in Wales he spent several delightful holidays. He was also greatly influenced by his uncle, Mr. A. W. Browne.

In 1902 he passed on to University College School, where he remained till 1905. His School record is summed up in the 'Valeté' notice in the *Gower* (September 1905) :—

'F. Goodyear, Room A, Sergeant of Monitors—First Eleven Colours 1904-5. Average Bat 1904. Member of Games Club Committee, Sergeant of Cadet Corps, Member of Scientific Society and Chess Club, Librarian of Reading-Room, Asst. Secretary Debating Society, Case Prizeman (bracketed), 1904-5, Carpenter Prizeman (bracketed), 1904, Colonel Young Prizeman, 1905, Lewis Prizeman (Latin Prose), 1904-5, Senior Reading Prize, 1904-5, Scholar of Brasenose College, Oxford.'

His Housemaster (for though University College is a day school, the boys are grouped into Houses), Mr. A. W. Tressler, under whom he subsequently served at Charterhouse, has added a few personal notes to this summary. 'From the first,' he writes, 'his striking appearance and incisive manner arrested attention. His interests were literary and artistic, rather than academic, and for schoolmasters bent on producing scholars at Oxford or Cambridge, he was not a very easy subject to handle. Essentially an eclectic, he found it difficult to concentrate on subjects that bored him. . . . I remember his once telling me that I could make him do most things, and I accepted it as a compliment, because Frederick Goodyear was not a boy who readily followed the crowd. He was not easy to influence, but you were never in doubt about his attitude, and, where others besides himself were concerned, I never knew him to turn back from the plough to which he had put his hand. . . . No Housemaster could have had a more capable and loyal House-captain.'

In March 1905, Frederick was elected to the Senior Classical Scholarship at Brasenose, and he went into residence the following autumn. The five years he spent at Oxford were, perhaps, the happiest in his life. The atmosphere of the University, offering, as it did, unlimited opportunity for the pursuit of every literary and intellectual interest, appealed most strongly to his discursive nature. He made many friends, both among his fellow-undergraduates and among the senior members of the College, being particularly attached to Mr. H. F. Fox. Owing to his preference for the byways of literature, he did not obtain the full degree of academic distinction which his abilities undoubtedly merited, but he probably regarded the invitation from the College to write the 'Ale Verses'<sup>1</sup> as a worthier in-

<sup>1</sup> Page 149.

centive for his talents than all the invitations to the Examination Hall. He could never be persuaded that his reading should be directed into the narrow channels prescribed by the Examining Body, and throughout his time he browsed at large on whatever aspect of literature, art, or philosophy pleased his fancy. Thus he was, as Mr. Fox writes, 'the despair of his tutors' hearts (getting worse as he went on); but his unconventional course of study undoubtedly developed his mental powers amazingly, and made him a most stimulating and delightful companion.'

At the same time, the shyness, which had always been a trait in his character, became greatly intensified at Oxford. The habit of self-analysis, which is naturally prevalent in academic circles, grew upon him, till he seemed to look at himself as if it were no concern of his; to regard himself as somebody else for whom he was not actually responsible, indeed, as some one whose aberrations were a fit and proper subject for his own entertainment. And this abstraction of mind did not—as it sometimes does—result in a strengthening of his will; on the contrary, it combined with his natural modesty to induce in him an attitude of self-disparagement, which, though it possibly began as a convenient excuse for his eclecticism, in the end became a settled and serious self-deception. The academic influence of Oxford, in fact, disheartened him, as it has many of her sons—refining his critical faculties, but atrophying his powers of action.

It was therefore in a somewhat unsettled mood that Fredrick left Oxford after getting—to the disappointment of everybody but himself—a Second Class in his Final Schools. Cast adrift from the moorings to which he had become attached, for the next few years he drifted rather than took up any definite career. So far as he had a profession, he was a journalist, reporting Cricket for *The Field* (through the introduction of Mr. A. W. Browne, who was then Sports sub-editor), and contributing essays, reviews, and occasional verses to various magazines and periodicals, mainly to *Rhythm*. In 1910 he visited Finland for *The Field*, and an account of his experiences there will be found among these letters.<sup>1</sup> And in 1913 he went to Paris with Mr. J. Middleton Murry, and stayed there for some months, during which he was occupied with a long autobiographical novel. Both episodes he enjoyed, but neither seems to have left any marked effect on his temperament or character.

Early in 1914 he forsook journalism to take up a post as temporary Assistant Master at Charterhouse: but the conven-

<sup>1</sup> Pages 22-29.

tional atmosphere of a public school and the necessary routine of the educational machine was hardly capable of captivating him permanently. On leaving Charterhouse, he made arrangements to write a series of books on **British Sports**; but no sooner had he entered into the proposal sufficiently to realise what it meant than he accepted a post as Assistant Manager of the Oxford University Press at Bombay (April 1914), chiefly, as he explained, to get himself out of the contract.

The visit to India—and particularly an expedition which he made to Marmagao<sup>1</sup>—gave him a new and stimulating environment. But he was not long enough there to become acclimatised, and he suffered a good deal with his eyes during the hot weather. His shyness, too, handicapped him in Anglo-Indian society; and his letters suggest that he was more interested in the India of the Indians than in the super-imposed British civilisation in which he had to move. However, within a few months of his arrival, the European War broke out, and after remaining at Bombay till the manager, whose place he was filling, had returned, he threw up his post and sailed for home in January 1915.

On his arrival, he went straight to the headquarters of the Artists' Rifles and enlisted, proceeding to France in May. His temperament was not naturally attuned to military discipline, and before long he had some minor passage with his Sergeant-Major, which he has described, with his usual humour, in the 'Loyal and Heroic Ballad of the Bloody Wars in France.'<sup>2</sup> Although it was an episode such as must have happened time and again in the training of our civilian armies, it led to some difficulty in getting a commission. Accordingly, he put in for a post as observer in the Meteorological department, and, despite a change of tone on the part of the regimental authorities, he adhered to his application and secured a transfer, with the rank of corporal, to the Royal Engineers in September 1915. For the next year he led a vegetative existence behind the lines, studying the flora and fauna of France and Flanders as much as, or more than, the atmospheric conditions, on which his military duties were concentrated. In the summer of 1916, however, he had an instinct, as he says, that one of his migratory periods was coming on; and he was sent back to England to go through the Cadet course at Newmarket, obtaining a commission in the Essex Regiment in February 1917.

During this his last stay in England, he seemed to be more himself than he had been since leaving Oxford: the hesitation and lack of confidence that had overclouded the past few years

<sup>1</sup> Page 76.

<sup>2</sup> Page 174.