

**A SCHOLAR'S
LETTERS
FROM THE FRONT**

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A Scholar's Letters from the Front by Stephen H. Hewett

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STEPHEN H. HEWETT

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Stephen Hewett.
1910.

W. H. L. Co., N.Y.

A SCHOLAR'S LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

WRITTEN BY

STEPHEN H. HEWETT

2ND LIEUT. IN THE ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

F. F. URQUHART

FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD

WITH PORTRAIT

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TO
DOM LEANDER RAMSAY
HEADMASTER OF DOWNSIDE SCHOOL
1902-1918

"HIS HEADMASTER STILL"



INTRODUCTION

MANY soldiers' letters have been published during the past three years, and with reason, for we should keep what record we can of a generation so gallant and so sorely stricken. Yet a few words of explanation are perhaps due, when an addition is made to the number of such publications. Englishmen are proverbially reticent in expression, especially when they feel deeply, and the letters of English soldiers have been distinguished on the whole by this reserve. They contain, often enough, vivid pictures of things done or suffered, of the daily routine or the occasional adventure, but they are rarely meditative, they rarely reveal the thoughts or emotions of the writer, and we must go to their verses to find what our soldiers *feel* about the war. There is therefore good reason for publishing some of the letters of a young Oxford scholar to whom the war was a searching experience but who took it with a cheerful heart, one who from boyhood had sought the art of expression and for whom a thought was not mature until it had received adequate utterance.

Stephen Hewett was born in India in 1893. His father was in the Indian telegraph service, a career which in the wilder parts of the country had often meant danger and adventure. On Mr. Hewett's

retirement from the service the family came to live in Exeter, and Stephen was sent to Downside in 1905. He remained there till midsummer 1911. The school lies on the northern slopes of the Mendips, in an open, windy country of grass and trees, of distant views and unexpected valleys. It is under the care of Benedictine monks and no boy of any sensitiveness could fail to be influenced, however unconsciously, by the orderly carrying out of the Catholic liturgy in a church worthy of it, while the trials of school life are softened by the share which the boys have in the peace and sympathy of the Benedictine family. As a boy Stephen Hewett was very reserved, not making friends easily, and very diffident of his powers. Yet his capacity was undoubted from the first. He read widely, thoughtfully and with intense appreciation. With this power of assimilation he combined a very mature taste and a delight in the music and meaning of single lines, of phrases which seemed to him the perfect expression of a thought or an emotion. He went up for the Balliol Scholarship Examination at the age of sixteen and won an Exhibition. He went up again in the following year, 1910, and was elected to the first scholarship. But he was far from being only a scholar. He was a good cricketer with some excellent strokes, which are still remembered in the school, and in his last year he was captain of the XI. He played also in the football and hockey teams. That great period in a boy's life, his last year at school, he enjoyed to the full. In the secure possession of a scholarship and under sympathetic guidance he could read what he wished; while with success and maturer years there came greater self-confidence. Shy, hitherto, and