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"FRATRES"

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"FRATRES"

Volume 25. No. I.

To the vast majority of us the thought of a new number of "Fratres" conjures up the memories of all that ensues after some foolish officer or committeeman has said at a meeting—"Let's have a magazine". Two or three months afterwards, the same person will complain that "No one has sent in any articles yet". Two or three months after we will be told that the last day for receiving articles will be in a fortnight—postponed perhaps two or three times for two or three more fortnights. Eventually "Fratres" will appear, sometimes typed, sometimes printed; sometimes illustrated, sometimes mere literature; nearly always, in the end, the work of two, or at the most three people, and always pronounced as "The best we have ever produced"; bought by a few but read by all, a link which binds together the members of Oxford & St. George's.

To some, however, there will be memories, which go back as far as 25 years ago, when the club magazine was first produced and circulated among those boys who were serving in the Great War in order to bring a breath of the Club Spirit to refresh the members wherever they might be, and to give news of each other to the little band of brothers who in those days comprised the club. "Fratres" were very precious documents in those days, treasured by all who received them, and made up of willing contributions from those who were serving at home and those who were serving abroad.

Twenty-five years, and here we are doing the same thing in the same kind of way for the same kind of people and for the same kind of purpose. Then, however, there were about 100 members of the Club; now there are 3,000 members of the Settlement. It is the same kind of family, and, curiously enough, it has four of the same original leaders. the Missus, Princie, S.E.F., and the Gaffer.

We all trust that this new "Fratres" will keep us together wherever we may be, and it will serve to remind us of the amazing friendships which bind all Oxford & St. George's people to one another, and to the grand ideals of the Club.

THE OXFORD & ST. GEORGE'S CLUB.

The following is an extract from a certain "indiscreet" book which was published by Methuen a little while ago, describing March 3rd, 1914 :—

As a matter of fact, we had in that one room almost all the activities of a modern club. There was ping-pong at one end, billiards on a table 12" by 18" played with balls the size of pills and cues the size of pen-holders. In the middle was boxing; in another corner was chess and draughts. Half-way through the evening we cleared the room for mat-work. There was a piano which none of us could play; the whole evening was one continuous debate, and there was complete freedom to make as much noise as you liked, for no-one knew how to stop it!"

"But the end of the evening was the most difficult, for I had determined that we were to close with prayers..... I recited an extemporary English prayer..... Then I pronounced the priestly blessing, and the first night was over."

The same description might be given of the War Emergency Mixed Club which was opened in the main hall on September 5th, 1939, and which is now meeting every night of the week. But there are some important differences. "*Ma Nishtano*" In 1914, the number on the books was 25; to-day it is over 450. Then everybody was 14; now the ages are from 13 to 40. Then there were boys only; now there are boys and girls. Then one had to create a Club Spirit; to-day perhaps the most wonderful part of the new Club is that the Spirit was already made, and one got the feeling, even after the first night, that the Club had been running for years.

Besides the activities already described, we roll back the drugget and dance on Sunday nights, have P.T., badminton, roller skating, wrestling and boxing either in the Girls' Gym. or the Rink, and now have the use of the whole of the Old Boys' Club. The girls have the Committee Room as their sanctuary, and the Play Centre as their changing room. Everyone, (even the Old Boys!!) has to register, and this is done by giving a number instead of a house or group. The Old Boys feel quite young again at having to do what they ought always to have done. Subs. are voluntary, and are wonderfully generous.

David Caminer, Charlie Abrahams, Barney Callis and Alf Diamond take it in turns to be chief air raid stewards each night, and occasionally we have practice warnings, so that everybody knows where to go. Field football has already started, and roof football has been going at week-ends.

We want you to know that we are positive that you will feel just as much at home coming into the new Club as you have felt at home on coming into Camp. The surroundings are different, but the spirit is the same.

IN HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES.

You will find on the first page a revised list of those who are serving in His Majesty's Forces. We want to keep this up to date, but it will not be possible to reprint it in each issue. In future we shall only give you the additional names.

Practically every serving Old Boy is in touch with us. In every letter that we get, there is a most amazing expression of affection for the Club, which is, they nearly all say, like a second home to them. If the Club motto means anything to any of us, it should have this effect on all of us.

Everyone seems to spend part of his leave with us, and to those of us who have been running the Club all these years, there comes the conviction that is has not been in vain.

From among the very many letters which we have received, we have only been able to select the following extracts. Space will not allow for more :—

MOSS, who will be remembered by all as the fellow one had to get past on coming into the Settlement, writes :

"Please accept enclosed 10/- as a contribution towards literature, etc. This contribution will be made every quarter during hostilities."

We are going to place this most generous gift towards-defraying the cost of printing "FRATRES".

EARLE ADLER :—

"For the last three months I've been getting awful attacks of rheumatism, caused apparently by a septic tonsil which must come out before I can be passed fit."

He has since been operated on at the Middlesex and is making good progress.

"BOZZIE" :—

Our own Sergeant is quite the Grandfather—cum wet nurse—cum schoolmaster rolled into one"

"CHARLES" DREYFUS :—

"We get up at 6.30 a.m. That just shows there is a War."

BASIL GUEDALLA :—

"I knocked into Sam Smith yesterday, and he's promised me the luxury of a bath !!"

ALF GLYNNE :—

"I am enjoying myself thoroughly."

JACK HEWITT, (known to the Settlement staff as "Jack"), who is overseas, writes :—

"I am trying to keep the Oxford & St. George's spirit up, by keeping smiling and happy."

"GEORGE" JEWELL :—

"Scholy sent me along the Rugger ball This will give us a little temporary outlet."

"LEFTY" :—

"I feel an old soldier in my bones."

"BENNIE" KLIGER, who is overseas, writes :—

"Everything we do here seems to work in harmony, and the men here in our unit are as one; in fact it puts my mind back to the grand old days in the Club, when the wonderful spirit of each for all prevailed"

"Now more than ever do I appreciate that marvellous spirit of "Fratres" which you instilled into us."

VICTOR MER :—

"This week the food has not so much turned over a new leaf as opened a new book altogether."

JACK RAPPORT :—

As an old soldier of nearly five months' standing I have been nominated for a post as Physical Training Instructor."

WOOLF SORRIN :—

I am improving myself physically and mentally, and in the few weeks I have been here I am making myself fit as anybody can wish to be."

"GUSSIE" SEGAL :—

"For the first few days I said practically nothing to anybody; its surprising how hard it is to break into a small clique, but after playing football for my battery, things were much more pleasant."

SAMMY TOUCHE :—

"I must say that it's a very hard job leaving the Club on Sunday nights in time to catch my train, in fact I've just made it in time on each occasion. I have never known the club to be lacking in spirit, but the few times, that I have seen it recently, have topped even anything I ever saw before. The way the 22s mix with the 14s, seniors with juniors, girls with boys is something that I personally have never seen before. That big hall seems to have something now that none of the club rooms had. To me, it seems a pity that we had to have a war to bring about this miraculous change."

We also get a large number of letters from evacuated boys. We should have liked to give their news. They all write happily; some say they have been spending their days "fishing and shooting". One writes, "Newmarket, as you may know, lives, breathes, and even eats racehorses I am very happy here."

It is not always easy to rise above one's surroundings in War time, but when a fellow realises he has the honour of his Club in his hands, and when he has been in the habit of trying to live up to a certain standard, he is, if he goes on trying, invariably able to keep his head above water.

One serving boy writes :—

"The party in your room is one that will forever stand forth in my memory as a striking example of what the club has always taught and stood for—courage, determination, brotherhood, and good faith."

And this came from another serving boy :—

"Probably you may have noticed me at the Synagogue on Saturday Having attended for the past six years, I had to this year too, especially on account of the very critical period we are all passing through now.

"Gazing round at my friends, I managed to re-capture some of the past memories I had often enjoyed of the club.

"Alas, the time passed all too quickly, but leaving the Club I promised myself at all times to try my utmost to do my duty as an Englishman, a Jew, and as befitted a member of the Oxford

& St. George's. I was also proud to think that I in a humble way was helping to carry on the tradition of the Club, which has almost been a second home for me; the tradition of Justice, Freedom, and Friendship."

Perhaps all of us feel this. However vile and loathsome War is to us all, justice, freedom, toleration and truth are more precious than peace; these are the things every Englishman feels he is fighting for, and after all, these are the Club ideals.

SOCIAL EVENTS.

Marriage has suddenly become very popular. You will want to wish "All the best" to :—

- Eddie Woolf, who has married a club member, Rachel Rosenbaum,
- Ginger Mazzer,
- Bill Nathanson,
- Alf Joseph, who has married a club member, Marie Landes.

The first two of these weddings took place in the Settlement Synagogue. An enormous number of other engaged couples say they are going to get married. It is hoped all members will keep us informed of such important news.

A daughter has been born to Mr. and Mrs. Mark Fineman.

OXFORD & ST. GEORGE'S FRIENDLY SOCIETY.

The **Voluntary Section** is continuing its functions every Monday night. Serving members have the option (a) to continue their membership as usual, or (b) to be placed on the "Abeyance" list. Those in the latter category pay no contributions while in the forces and receive all benefits except sickness and convalescence. On demobilisation they are restored to ordinary membership.

The **Approved Section** is flourishing, and a number of new members have been enrolled. Serving members are reminded that although they do not have cards, they are insured under the National Health Insurance scheme, and are invited to join the Club's Society if they do not already belong to an approved Society. For further information write to Alf Diamond at the Settlement.

light from the lover's moon on the incoming waves leaves me cold. The silhouettes of the palm-trees compete with the films, as they are all old, and one sits on home-made chairs in a clearing in the jungle.

DAN SMITH.

"E" COMPANY.

The following letter was received from the parent of two Club boys. "I do not wish my boys to attend Cadets, as I do not think it necessary now that the war is over." After a very great deal of hesitation, it has been decided to agree with this parent (who voices the opinion of many other parents as well as that of many of the Cadets), and on November 6th "E" Company of 1st Bn. (City of London Cadets) Royal Fusiliers, was disbanded.

During the five years it has been in existence, the Company has not only attained a high standard of military efficiency, but it has satisfied the terrific desire of the members to take their full share in defending their country in her hour of need and peril. The Company owes much to Nat Seller, who drilled it with broomsticks in the early days. The camps have been able, to a certain extent, to maintain the traditions of the Highdown spirit. Many of its N.C.O.s have obtained their tapes very soon after being called up, and there are probably few who will not have happy memories of the friendships made, of the "battles" fought, and even of the drill and discipline learnt.

It might have done better if its O.C. had retained his figure of the last war and had learnt the tactics of this one! It would certainly have done better if the War Office had supplied a permanent P.S.I., so that the instruction had been as good as that given to the Naval Cadets or the A.T.C.

Sincere gratitude must be felt to Major Harold Lion, who spent many evenings with the Company, and also to Mr. Phillips, who helped in the Orderly Room and Q. Stores.

In many respects it is with real regret that "E" Company is disbanded. It is to be hoped that the best part of Cadet training may still be retained in the life of the Club—the smartness of bearing, the self-control, the dependability and the initiative. The O.St.G. may well feel proud of what its Cadets achieved during the war. It is especially pleasant that the week before it disbanded all those who sat for Certificate "A," Part II., obtained their certificate—L/Cpl. S. Crashinsky, L/Cpl. Teddy Gold, Cadet Cecil Lefcovitch, and L/Cpl. Berny Rosenberg.

CLUB NEWS.

The first peace-time Old Boys' Club Dance was held on October 6th. There were about 300 present, and their ages ranged from 18 to 45. Wives and grown-up "grandchildren," fiancées and "girl-friends" helped to make it a most wonderful evening. No one could help feeling that he or she belonged to the O.St.G. family, for there was a spiritual tie which bound the youngest present to the oldest. It is anticipated that the Boxing Night Dance will be the biggest and happiest reunion since the war!

We have held Club sports and Club boxing tournaments during the past month, both of which events have shown that we have, in the present set of boys, material as good as any in the past, but that they need developing and training. The same thing was noticed in the 1922 Parents' Evening, held on October 27th. There was real latent talent in music, drama and P.T., but the necessary training was obviously lacking. Old boys can therefore perhaps guess how desperately badly they are needed to help the tired, worn out and overworked managers who have held the fort during the war, and who now simply must be relieved. They are hanging on because so many have promised to help as soon as they are demobbed. The serving old boys, therefore, are not the only ones who are saying "Roll on, group number?"

At the Mixed Parents' Evening, which took place on October 28th, the Hall was full to overflowing. Seldom, if ever, have so many parents attended. It was a combined effort of the girls and the 1914 boys, and the "Variety Revue" was produced entirely by Zena White (Norman's sister), Sid Rothenberg (Simmy's brother), and Harold Rose (Harry Hiatt's brother-in-law). It was a tremendous success, and though it may not have been—indeed it was not—as highbrow as many of our shows have been, it was really good fun. The producers have gone grey and bald after the many weeks of rehearsal, but their efforts were fully rewarded by the laughter and appreciation of the audience.

Len Woolf, who was quite excellent at the job, has had to resign the secretaryship of the 1914 Club, and his place has been taken by Sonny Herman. Harold Simmons (brother of Maurice), Sweeny Winchouse, and Basil Fiddleman have been helping in the 1922 Club, and Alan Montefiore, who is fortunately stationed in London, has been coming up once a week.

Once again it can be said that the serving old boys will not be disappointed in their Club when they visit it or come back to join it once more as active members. Although on a Monday night no one can hear a word of what any one else says—such is the crowd who now attend each week—yet it is good to see the old faces again, and at any rate to hear their voices and their laughter.

BRITISH LEGION.

Very great interest has been shown by O.St.G. serving members in our branch of the British Legion, and I want to deal briefly with what the Legion sets out to do and what its objectives are.

The British Legion was formed soon after the last war in order to deal with the problems arising from the rehabilitation into civilian life of ex-service men and women as they were demobilised or discharged. Membership is confined to ex-service men and women of all branches of the services, including the Merchant Navy and the Nursing Service; you cannot join the Legion until you have been demobilised or discharged. It is an enormous organisation with various ramifications, and deals with every aspect of demobilisation, rehabilitation into civilian life, jobs, pensions, training disabled men for new occupations, and all the other questions which face men and women on leaving the Forces.

It has a National Committee which controls all the 4,800 branches in all parts of the British Isles, as well as Area and District Committees. The opinions of any individual member in any particular branch can be carried to the District Committee, then to the Area Committee, and finally to the National Committee. The membership runs into many millions. While it is obviously true to say that many of its members are ex-service men and women of the last war, yet we are enrolling ex-service men and women of this war as fast as they leave the services. I do not want you to think that the British Legion consists merely of "old sweats" of the last war. At the last Annual Conference the need for younger men on the Council of the Legion was stressed; the democratic principles upon which the Legion is run enable any member to take office if he has the necessary qualifications.

The British Legion does not deal with problems of serving men and women. It does not concern itself with conditions of service, pay or leave, or any of the problems with which you may be confronted while you are actually in the services. It can only deal with your problems when you leave. Its prestige in Government circles is very high. It has direct contact with all Government Departments, such as the Ministry of Pensions and the Board of Trade, and has been successful in securing the amendment of various regulations which were irksome to ex-service men and women who wanted to start in business, and has also dispensed with a number of anomalies which could not be foreseen at the time these regulations were instituted.

Lew Burstoff and Tim Yates have won their tapes and brevets as Sergeant Air Gunner. We offer our hearty congratulations to them, and to the following on their promotions: Jack Grant to Lieutenant; Hubert Beddington, Julius Ginswick, Phil Kunick, Lou Levine, and Sydney Rosenbaum to Captain; Andrew Singer to Lieutenant; Joe Fox to C.Q.M.S.; Lou Fader, Bernard Green, Reuben Needle, Mossy Simons and Sam Steiner to Sergeant; Harold Rose to L.E.M.; Lionel Goldring and Alan Kaminash to Corporal; Sid Garfinkle to Lance Bombardier; Esher Kanovitch and Jack Spector to Lance Corporal; and Gussie Folkson, Eric Goldberg, Alfred Hersh and Destry Summers to L.A.C.

HOBNAILS ON MY BOOTS.—No. 30.

As sure as night has to follow day and "browned-offishness" leave, so my posting had to come. For the first time since joining the Army I felt I was doing a useful job, and was as happy in it as any one of my uncertain temperament and sombre disposition can hope to be when in khaki. I had been in the compact little unit near Manchester (that city of grime and incredibly rickety trams) for over two years, knew everyone as everyone knew me, appreciated the little privileges that come naturally to high-rankers and very painstakingly to old-timers of no rank, and was left alone—more or less—to do my work without undue military interference. That's why my posting had to come along. Obviously it was inevitable. Whoever heard of a soldier (we won't dispute the use of the word here) being left in peace to do work he liked in a depot to which he had become attached?

After a foul seven-hour train journey, and straining creakily under full kit plus fire-arms, I shuffled into my new depot. I had heard tales about the vastness of the place, which is a Very Important Depot, yet even so I was unprepared for the hugeness of it. It really is terrific—a town in itself. Acres of sheds, workshops, railways, brick billets, Nissen huts, vehicle parks and compounds of many assortments spread over an area as far as the eye can see—and a bit beyond. I was struck chilly, despite my physical sweat, by the cold, dispassionate, inhuman, militaristic air of it all. The sprawling sight gave me a nasty dose of the "willies" and caused me to pray silently to Heaven—and the Government—to speed up demobilisation.

I arrived, after many futile wanderings caused by several misleading "you can't miss it's" from too confident "helpers", at my battalion office. "Are you an ex-prisoner of war?" was the first question popped at me after I had presented my credentials to the N.C.O. in the office. I was fired, fed-up, hungry and in a strange place I detested. "No," I snapped back, "but I shall certainly consider myself one when I sheer off away from this dump." The Corporal came over all "stripe-ish" after that and warned me that if he had "any more of it," he and I would pay a little visit to the C.S.M., who, so he prophesied, would teach me a thing or two. Thereafter I gave my particulars sulkily but correctly. I know when it pays not to be "witty."

The hut to which I was sent turned out to be on top of a hill—of course. Struggling up to it with kit, rifle, palliasses and blankets, I sweated profusely and swore even more. Obscenities came unbidden to my lips. All the known swear-words rolled off my tongue; I even invented new adjectives and nouns for the occasion. My thoughts went something like this: "Only a — private. What the — hell do they care what — happens to a mere — private? If I'd been some fat old — of a — brigadier, now, I'd be — driven by a — At in a — staff car to a — big mansion. But a stinking — private. . . ." I arrived at the hut in a lather of sweat and almost fell with my strappings when I dropped those encumbrances to the floor. The only "kip-spot" available was the top tier of a six-foot bunk. How I thought of my late unit as a very Paradise, and Manchester as the most celestial of cities!

I asked one of the men lying beautifully at ease in his bottom bunk what the depot was like. "It's an 'ome from 'ome, friend," quoth the at-ease gentleman, who was obviously a thoroughbred cockney. "Is it?" I asked, quite unconvinced. "Yus, friend, it is—if yer've always 'ad a work 'us for an 'ome," retorted the cockney.

Next morning I attended the M.I. room for an F.F.I. A lance-jack with an inflated sense of his own importance told me to strip to the waist and wait until the M.O. was ready to inspect me, apparently for the purpose of making sure that I was a fit person to be allowed the privilege of staying in the Depot. As always, I waited . . . and waited . . . and waited, growing colder with the passing of time. After three and a half hours the M.O. condescended to call me into his room. I had barely walked in and started to loosen my trousers when he said, "All right, you can go." I had been "examined" and passed in something under three seconds. God bless and preserve some army medicos!

My first parade shook me. I had been detailed to go along for work to a certain section and had joined the appropriate squad. On the square the N.C.O. in charge yelled, "Building 389—shun! Quick march!" It was a full second before I realised that he was referring to my squad (and me). Now I have been called a variety of things since being in the Army, but this was something quite new. To be called not only a building, but a building with a number to it! I wonder what the N.C.O. would have called me (and the squad) had my place of work been a prefabricated hut? I'm still wondering.

That wasn't the only shaking I received that morning. When I arrived at my place of work (Building 389) I saw the Major in charge, who told me why I had been posted to him. This Major, it appeared, was editor of the depot weekly wall-sheet. He had read my articles in various Corps' magazines and had liked them. So he had applied for me to help him produce his accursed wall-sheet. My work was to praise the Depot and all in it (and the higher the ranks mentioned, the more mushy the "bull," so I was to discover). My mag. writings had produced the ghastly result of having me posted to this hole, and I was expected to write stuff praising the place! Wondrous, indeed, are the ways of Fate!

I still don't like the Depot, Building 389, the wall-sheet, my top bunk, the Army (less so than ever) and all its works. I'm in group 34. How long, O Lord? How long?

• SAM KIRKWOOD.

"ARABIA FOR THE ARABS."

The Palestine situation is something that all of us who have been in the Middle East at any time during the war have always expected to flare up, and with the conditions as they are at present it requires only a small "incident" to set off the Arabs into a "Holy War." It is quite obvious that the entire Arab world is united in resisting further Jewish immigration into the Holy Land, and when we think of the remnants of European Jewry who are in such distress looking upon Palestine as the one hope of salvation from their sufferings, and as the chance of living a good life, it all seems such a tragic state of affairs.

The Arabs in their claims are not only resisting the Jews, but are really pursuing a policy of "Arabia for the Arabs," as it were, which is so similar to the cries of "Asia for the Asiatics," "India for the Indians," and which all sounds so similar to "England for the British," which we heard in England from the British Union of Fascists, with such fervour. That is the same policy as driving away Europeans from Algeria, Lebanon, and North Africa.

The question of whether more Jews should immigrate into Palestine seems only an excuse to bring this question of "Middle East for the Arabs" to a head. The whole propaganda of Farouk and his Government in Egypt, for instance, has always been directed against the Europeans, be they British, French or Greek. The very ignorant peasant population

“WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING.”

“Thou favourest man with knowledge, and teachest mortals understanding. O favour us with knowledge, and understanding and discernment from thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, gracious giver of knowledge.”

—*The first prayer in the Amidah—the oldest portion of the Jewish liturgy.*

“Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore with all thy strength get understanding.”—*Proverbs iv. 7.*

There is an intellectual element in religion which cannot surely be denied. Faith concerns the reason as well as the feelings and the will. We could possess no faith if we had no reason.

Who are the most religious people we know? Who are the saints? Very often not learned people at all, not even wise people in any fairly usual sense of the word “wise,” but people with perhaps very ordinary brains, very limited understandings, very meagre intellectual attainments. But they are people who are loving, humble, prayerful. They are people who worship and adore. They live in the presence of God, and are filled with His strength and His peace. If the few ideas or intellectual conceptions which make up their store are adequately pure and good, nothing else seems needed or required. Let them, for example, believe that God is good, and that He wants them to be good; then, if goodness, as translated into human life, means for them patience and unselfishness and self-sacrifice and humility and love, the heights of religion can be reached with a very small intellectual endowment, and with a still more meagre equipment of knowledge.

Religion grows and develops through life and experience, through feeling and action, but also through study, thought and knowledge. And yet higher and greater than knowledge are righteousness and love. The ignorant old man has his own knowledge. And this knowledge is sometimes (as I believe) a knowledge of God as well as a knowledge of man. How, then, has the ignorant old man obtained this knowledge? He has won it from faith, he has won it from righteousness, he has won it from love.

C. G. MONTEFIORE,

Outlines of Liberal Judaism, pp. 263-6.