

An Alumna Writes

Letter from Oxford

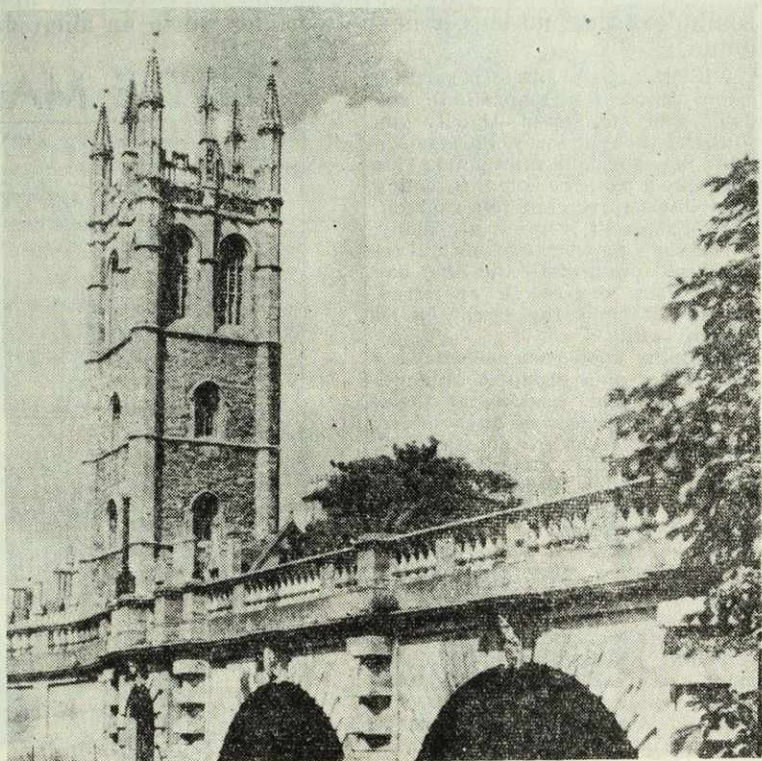
by MARG DOODY

Just think, last year I was writing Shirreff Hall at the top of my letters. Now I am at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford and very happy indeed. Oxford seems to be the loviest place on earth—I never thought there could be any place this wonderful.

No pictures of Oxford have ever done it justice. The first day I came it was raining, my room was chilly, the town was grey. I had to bustle out to buy some bedding. With my mind firmly on Practical Things and not in the least inclined to be sentimental, I took a walk down the High Street. Suddenly I came sharply upon Magdalen (pronounced Maud-lin) College, its beautiful silvery grey tower rising gloriously into the sky. I stood on the grey stone bridge over the Cherwell in the damp, and looked at it, and cried—it was so very beautiful.

Oxford has the atmosphere of a place that has been living and young for centuries. For hundreds of years people have studied and caroused and glorified God within those stone walls and peaceful green quadrangles and, the place has a strange peace about it, as if it were accustomed to joy and had lived intimately with beauty natural and in the beauty of mind and spirit. The spires are peaceful—I can see why they are called "dreaming spires" — but Oxford itself is very wide awake, and has been for centuries.

This autumn, as for hundreds of autumns, the place has suddenly overflowed with students. Now the streets are full of us — rushing around, biking madly, reading, walking, eating, arguing. We have to wear gowns to lectures, tutorials, and chapel—so we all look vaguely medieval, with the short sleeve-bands of our "overeste courtepy" flowing out behind us. We all ride bikes—I have never seen so many of them — thousands of students whizzing past on dilapidated looking things that run very well. Quite a sight—the streets congested with



"... it's beautiful silvery grey towers rising gloriously into the sky."

students zooking past, pedalling madly, attired in medieval garb; they look like so many bats.

English traffic is Mad, man. Nobody ever honks, as this is evidently considered vulgar, so you are expected to have an instinct about what every pedestrian, bicycle, motorcycle, Vespa, Messerschmidt, car, lorry, omnibus is going to do. No time to gaze sentimentally at

towers or the Dome of Radcliffe—keep your eyes glued to the traffic, in a fine frenzy rolling. I find biking in it all bracing, but nerve-racking—especially as everything is, of course, in the other side of the road.

I have a lovely large room, about 2.5 times as large as the one in

There's Nothing Wrong With Education

by MARTIN MORF

Disgraced be those surly souls who claim that a centralized, efficient, and purposive organization run by experts ought to mop up and take over the creaky chaos of our locally administrated education!

Things just aren't that bad!

The yearly fee hikes are moderate, book prices don't soar exactly sky high, room rents aren't quite extortionate yet, and some of us still can afford edible food.

For this reason it is no surprise that the federal government responds to the "problem of education" with patient shrugs and lame excuses.

The stately cabinet ministers look with benevolent paternalism on "those unruly youngsters clamoring for handouts," i.e., scholarships. They smilingly deposit NFCUS petitions for federal aid in the waste paper basket and earnestly point out that we still are superior to the Russians in "many vital fields," such as wheat surplus storage and knick knock arranging.

Shireff Hall. It has two large windows, which have a beautiful view of green lawns and gardens, poplars, a graceful willow, and the Cherwell. A lovely Park is right next door, where there is a pond with a lot of colorful mallard ducks. I hear them at night and in the morning—also, I am sure, the swans that live along the sweet, placid, glassy Cherwell. How romantic to say one was awakened by the honking of the swans—almost as good as a swan song!

True, twenty years from now the scientists trained in the sixties will determine our military strength. True, if those scientists are not trained, i.e., if more money is not supplied more quickly, someone else will handle educational problems. But why look twenty years ahead? As long as we have our daily roast beef now . . .

I have bought a nice tea-set, as everyone here gives coffee-parties (or even tea-parties) at the drop of a hat. Tea is not so easy to come by as one might think—they think it unhealthy to drink it with meals (except, of course, in the afternoon). We have coffee at morning, water and nothing else the other two meals. We get a ration of 1/3 pint milk a day in a little bottle.

Our system of education rests on the sturdy, though old, foundation of the BNA act. This act made education a local responsibility, hence our schools are provincial, denominational, military, private — anything but federal. The result is a gratifying mess of incompatible curricula, unqualified teachers, divergent aims, and overcrowded facilities.

Tea is partaken of in the afternoon, with appropriate accessories. The English think of tea as an event, not a drink. Today one of my girl friends had an afternoon tea and invited me — a gorgeous tea with real crumpets, which we toasted over the electric fire. Very nice people, quite enjoyable. I have made some lovely friends in Lady

But, just in case anybody should get ideas, the forming of a federal department of forestry does not mean that we need a department of education. After all, the welfare of trees is more of a national concern than the mere education of Canadian citizens.

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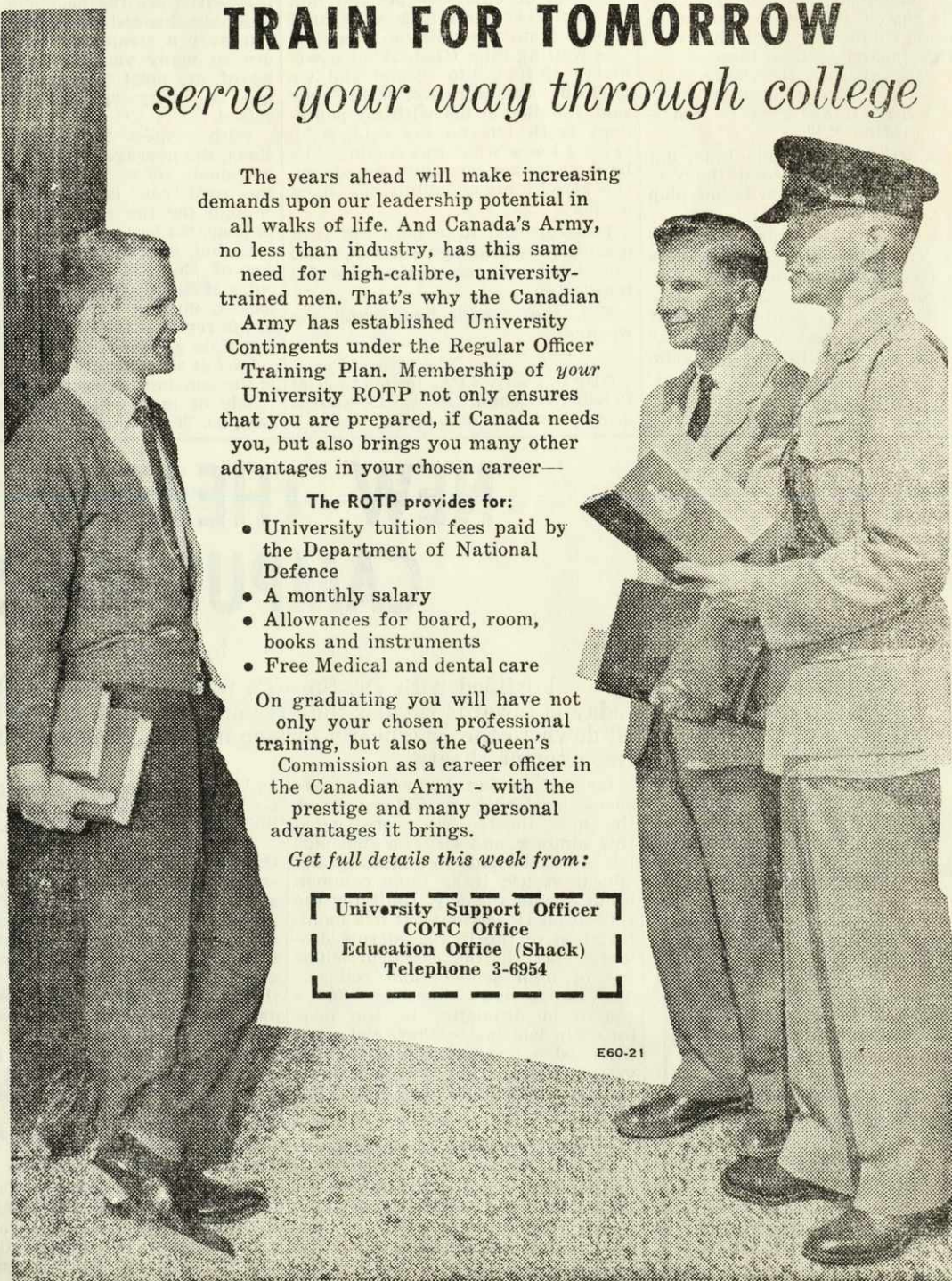
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