

INTRODUCTION

THE UNIVERSITY DURING THE WAR

WAR had been declared eight weeks before the session opened. On September 29th, 1914, the President in his opening address in Convocation Hall reviewed the causes of the war and appealed to the students present to face the issues before them, and in conclusion said:—

“This is the greatest of moral struggles. Are there to be free democracies who only need to police themselves against the force-attacks of the barbarous? Or will force tower arrogantly above freedom and enslave intellect? The struggle had to come. It is well to have it decided one way or other finally, for our own sakes and for our children's. This struggle I want you to think about. Many of our members have already heard the call and have left to take their share in the war. Some of them will lay down their lives for our sakes. Others of you will doubtless go later. Most of us will, I suppose, remain at home. But do not shirk whatever sacrifice is necessary. Be ready to defend your life which, with its freedom, has been won for you by others. Live a life of sacrifice this winter and thereby contribute something to help the nation in relieving its suffering. Do not be light-hearted. You cannot be as merry as yesterday, nor as blithe as we hope you will be in the world's to-morrow. The world is in agony, let this agony reach the depths of our nature also, so that it may purge our selfishness. If we shall not be called upon to die or be wounded in the flesh, I hope that we may carry into the revived life of our nation, when it issues from the struggle, the healed wounds of the spirit that will be the sign of the battle in which we have won over again the right to call ourselves free-men in a real democracy.”

The purpose of this record is to show what was the response made to the challenge thus voiced. In the end the answer went beyond the words of this first appeal. As time went on it became clear that most of those who were then addressed could not remain. Though to nearly all present and to the graduates throughout the country war had seemed remote and improbable, and when it came none could foretell its extent and intensity, the response was prompt and continuous. To those of us remaining here it was not always easy to realise how steadily the men were leaving through the years that followed. Singly or in small groups they went away, often without a word except a brief farewell to intimate friends.