

This first letter was the only one of many letters written by George Archer Hooke to his son Cyril in 1916 (when he was called up) - 1917, which was saved. Cyril wrote on the envelope in which it was found:

*Letters to me (C G H) from my father 1919-1925.
This is a small selection . Many destroyed.*

100 Drakefield Road
Upper Tooting
London SW

28th Feb 1916

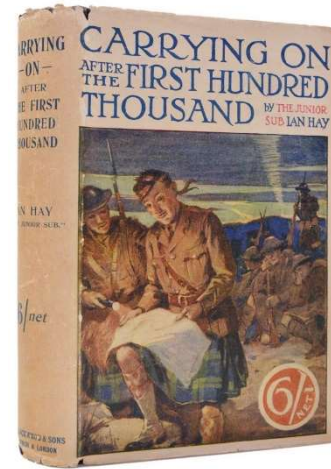
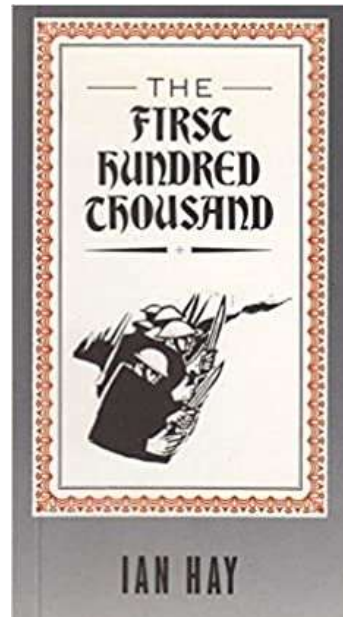
Dear Cyril

Your letters have been very highly appreciated as we were anxious to be able to picture your surroundings and you have helped considerably.

At the Custom House today, my friend Ganochio, who has obtained information in the subject, told me the supplementary charges I will have to pay will not be very serious and he also says the uniform you have as a cadet will be available for use when you get your Commission so that will tend to keep down expenses. I was interested to know your expenses but I can trust you and you may rely on me for all that is reasonable. I want you to have a good time but it will not be obtainable without some effort from both of us. You will do your bit.

I sent a copy of your first letter to all the girls and am sending your last to Trixie first as I am posting to her this evening.

Thanks for your good wishes. Mildred and Trixie have sent me a book by Ian Hay – “The first 100,000”, - a book you will like to read.



An excellent first edition of the sequel to 'The First Hundred Thousand' 'K (1)' (1915), which was one of the most popular books of its time. Both works feature wry and often amusing accounts of army life during the First World War ('First Hundred Thousand' refers to the author being one of first 100,000 of Kitchener's Army). Scarce in the correct first issue dust-jacket and in such condition – on sale for £475.

The remainder gave me a pair of lined gloves which are a treasure. I shall wear them with thoughts of you all.

The Sellars have been here this evening playing whist and have had to return in the melting snow.

Francie went for a walk with Dorothy Revell to Streatham Common and remained with her part of this evening.

You did not enclose your orders for the day so that will be an excuse for another letter and you will not tire us out. Your mother is very interested in your doings and joins with me in best love.

Yr affect^e father GeoaHooke

NOTE

The next letter was written in July 1918 in what turned out to be the final months of the War. Cyril, now aged 21 is Lieutenant in the BEF in France/Belgium and, according to his next letter, is in charge of the forward guns between BUCQOY & HANESCAMPS.

In London his father George, the writer of these letters, is aged 61, his wife Ellen 63, and the girls as follows:

Mildred 27 – teaching in Birmingham

Frances 26 -

Trixie 25 – is probably nearing completion of her MA at Cambridge before studying for an MSc in London.

Ella 23

Since the last letter was written in 1916 the family have moved from their home in Drakefield Road to 3 Woodlands Road, Barnes which was George & Ellen's home through to their deaths – Ellen in 1928 and George in 1934.

3 Woodlands Road
Barnes,
London SW 13

9th June 1918

Dear Cyril *(NB Cyril - I am with the B.E.F.)*

When one goes without for sometime, appetite grows keen, and then a feast is fully appreciated. Last Monday we were all very keen and your long letter dated the 28th ult. was much enjoyed. As it did not make any reference to letters received it gave us something to think about and I rejoiced greatly in finding it full of things which you enjoy, - that you are amongst good fellows, clever chaps, and that you find the horses even more attractive than the guns. I know you can enjoy cycling, and cricket and football so that we may recognise that, as Gilbert says, "Your capacity for innocent enjoyment is as great as that of any honest man."

Your cheery letter was such a contrast to the complaints which surround me. Most people are anxious to point out what things are wrong, at home, in politics, in Ireland, in Russia, in our Office, in all Government arrangements, in local affairs, everywhere that I go pretty well. I have

been out today with your mother to make a call for some people in Barnes and have met a Mr Perry Keane who certainly is as cheerful as you are. He is connected with a Birmingham firm who make aeroplanes and turn out 10 a day. He says the Germans cannot keep pace because they cannot get the materials, - the flax (*see note*) and other things necessary.

NB Linen is made from flax. Before 1914 the crop had largely fallen out of cultivation in England, but especially in the latter part of the First World War, it became essential for Britain to greatly increase the amount it grew as imports of it largely stopped. The military's demands for linen-based products such as tents and webbing were already almost insatiable, and as the size of the air fleet, and aircraft themselves, continued to grow, there was a specific requirement for high-quality 'aircraft cloth' to cover wings and airframes.

Then he is cheerful about the submarines. The sea is being mined so as to trap the beasts and the Germans cannot sweep away the mines because of our power in the air. He, like many others I have met, thinks that the air power will turn the scale in our favour, - quite apart from land fighting.

Our air forces certainly ought to make the German communications insecure and their dumps unreliable. I cannot but think that time is on our side. Then we talked of commercial arrangements and we came to the conclusion that our country is being organized and united for co-operative action in buying from, and selling to, other countries. There will be such economies made and such an increase of effective power that, as far as money is concerned, it is questionable whether the country will, ultimately, be at a loss on account of the war, - vast as the expenditure has been and is likely to be. For ourselves, of course, money values alone should not be regarded as sufficient for a full consideration. The most important item is the character of the persons affected and it is impossible to say what the value of the improvement in that respect will be.

I have been working to my utmost during the past week but managed to get your letters copied and sent to the girls the same day we received them. The second one, dated the 2nd arrived on the 6th.

As regards horses I find there are over 30 pages in the Encyclo: Brit: but only 2 or 3 about Stable management. "Regularity is absolutely indispensable". This and several other things apply equally to human beings. One question is when should meals be taken by horses and would the same times suit men. The Enc:Brit. Says 8am, 12 noon, 4pm and 8pm. I prefer 3 times only. 8am, 1pm and 6pm. What do you think?

As regards watering the E.B. says, "There has, of late years been a growing tendency to favour the plan of letting horses have access to water at all hours of the day and night, and experience has shown that the effect is beneficial." You merely write "Plenty of times" so I presume you agree. It also says, "Oats should be bruised; but, as they soon turn sour, it will be best to bruise every morning only as much as will suffice for the day."

"A few carrots will tend to keep the blood in good order."
"Maize or Indian corn contains so small a proportion of nutritious matter that it is not fit for hunters."
"Beans should be given only now and then in small quantities."
"For light work 9lbs oats & 11lbs hay."

When horses are allowed to have water as they want it they drink less than what even a stingy groom would allow. "A handful or two of chaff is useful as it compels a horse to masticate."

It will be interesting to know how far you agree. Naturally you had to condense when you packed your 10 rules into one sentence and no doubt doctors differ as to horses as with regard to men.

There is a page on horses' complaints, - corns, thrush, cracked heels, etc. but the treatment of horses does not seem very different to the way we would treat ourselves.

You say your officers know what should be done and the other necessary factor is discipline. I quite agree, - yet we do not believe in the methods the Germans adopt in enforcing discipline. I do not know how to describe the difference in the manner in executing one's duties. I can only say there is a subtle something which turns the scale.

Will you read the enclosed ballad of John Nicholson. It has puzzled me very much. We do not want our poets to glorify deeds of Englishmen which we should condemn if the Germans did them. At first sight the removal of shoes seems unnecessarily degrading but in the East it may be merely a courtesy equivalent to raising the hat or standing at attention. In some parts of the United States black men have no votes and are not allowed to walk on the pavements but the Germans are condemned for following the same practice as regards giving the military similar preference over civilians.

At the Durbar at Delhi some 10 years ago a native Prince turned his back after being received by our present King and his name was merely removed from those received at Court. That seemed to me an appropriate way of dealing with people not willing to show the usual courtesies to dignitaries.

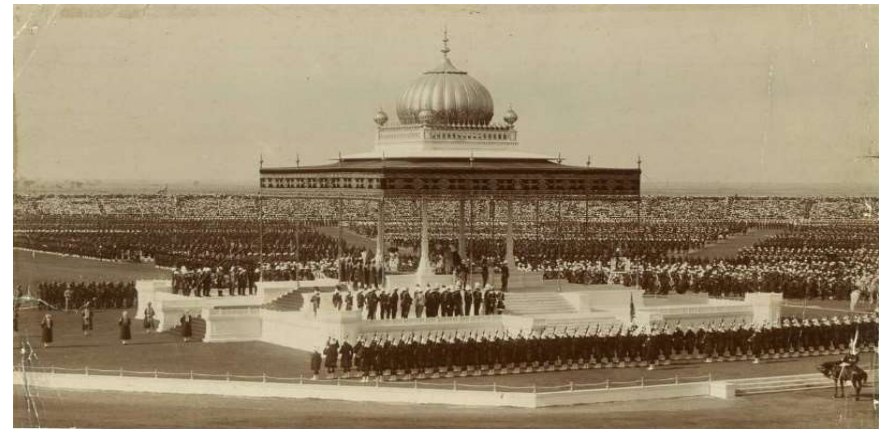


Figure 1: Figure 1: The Delhi Durbar of 1911, with King George V and Queen Mary seated upon the dais

NB Wikipedia:

The **Delhi Durbar** (lit. "Court of Delhi") was an Indian imperial-style mass assembly organized by the British at [Coronation Park, Delhi, India](#), to mark the succession of an [Emperor or Empress of India](#). Also known as the **Imperial Durbar**, it was held three times, in 1877, 1903, and 1911, at the height of the [British Empire](#). The 1911 Durbar was the only one that a sovereign, [George V](#), attended. The term was derived from the common [Persian](#) term [darbar](#).

How to behave to rude people is one of the most difficult tasks. Only last week Justice Darling has been condemned for allowing too much latitude to Billing (See note below) and has friends in a libel case. Even if one does not care to enforce one's dignity there is sometimes a duty to hit upon the correct course. John Nicholson was killed before Delhi in 1857 at the age of 35. He was Brigadier General and so impressed the natives that he became to them a demi-god and a brotherhood of fakhirs in 1848 initiated a religious cult for the worship of Nikal-Seyn which continued to flourish in spite of his efforts to suppress it by punishment.

The remainder and conclusion of this letter is missing

It is well worth reading the history of John Nicholson in Wikipedia, a controversial figure today but a man with a very strong Christian faith who was widely respected and honoured as a martyr of the British Empire in the late 19C.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nicholson_\(East_India_Company_officer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nicholson_(East_India_Company_officer))

The trial of Noel Pemberton Billing, referenced above by George Hooke, concluded a week before this letter was written with Billing's acquittal on 4th June 1918. You can read the whole sordid story here:

<https://spartacus-educational.com/FWWdarling.htm>

Statue of John Nicholson in Market Square, Lisburn N Ireland.



3 Woodlands Road,
Barnes,
London SW13

12th July 1918

Dear Cyril,

Time is slipping by rapidly and I am sorry so long a time has passed since I wrote last. I know you have news from the others and when I am pressed with other things I put off writing. Even now your mother and I are alone and she keeps on talking. If I do not reply she naturally thinks it rough on her after being alone all day. Then it is difficult to collect one's thoughts and carry on a conversation at the same time.

Your letter of the 29th June was very interesting but it took 10 days in coming whereas your Post Card of the 6th July arrived on the 8th. That also was very welcome.

I have to congratulate you on being full blown Lieut. and on your success in your impromptu sports. You did not say who the winner in your race was.

When you quoted the Latin - *Tempora mutantur* you left out the last two letters and we did not know whether

For non-Latin scholars the Latin phrase:
tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis
means –
the times change, and we change with them.

your Latin is a bit stale or whether this was the result of your love for abbreviation. I wonder whether you know the remainder of the quotation. I did not until I looked it up – *nos et mutantur in illis*. I dare not send a translation for fear of offending your dignity as a Latin scholar.

I have been looking up names in the Army List but cannot identify many of your colleagues without initials. I have the full list of names of those who passed in with you and notice that none of them have yet acquired acting rank or become adjutants.

I think I may also congratulate you on the interest you take in all your work. It will make your life happier to yourself and make you more valuable to and appreciated by, your superior officers. The men who put their minds into their work, do their best quietly and without fuss are the men who are wanted. The leaders do not say anything at the time but when occasions arise they know where to go, - and the need does come.

I must not talk or write about matters connected with the war as an Admiralty clerk got fined £20 for talking about the movements of ships. He could not keep quiet, - that was all. There was no particular gain in what he said.

It is impossible for an Englishman to write much without referring to the weather. Last Saturday was a glorious bright sunny day. Your mother and I had a very early cup of tea and went to Kew Gardens. We walked down some of the Vistas and I thought I had never seen anything more beautiful in my life. We studied the trees which were then at their best. We sat down by the river side and read our books and allowed the time to pass until we found we were more than ready for our tea although some distance from any place where it could be obtained. However we got some in Richmond eventually.

There are all kinds of limitations as regards food and prices are much higher than they used to be, - but we can get everything that is really necessary and the highest prices can be easily avoided. Nothing has been settled yet as to whether I get a War Bonus.

I expect you have heard that Brenda Perrin turned out a fraud. I do not remember whether I have told you or whether you have heard from others. Her father told Buff that his daughter, aged 21, married Captⁿ Perrin 3 years ago and they had one child. Arthur passed Brenda back to her mother but the young woman disappeared. Captⁿ Perrin (widower at one time,) arrived at Southampton, was terribly distressed but ready to forgive. Buff has not heard from Arthur for some time, but supposed he is still at Southampton.

Aunt Maria left the hospital last Saturday with great hope that the operation on her eye will give good results. Everything looks favourable. But she was not treated quite satisfactorily in some ways. The operation was on 20th June, a cold day, and she was left standing about, with very little clothes on until she was nearly frozen. Then she could not get any water either to make her warm or to drink. However, the net result is good.

We are leaving the girls to make their own plans. Last week no doubt they counted on a continuance of fine weather. For the last 3 days we have had a deluge that has been most valuable. We wonder what St Swithins will do next Monday.

Jones returned to duty on the 5th inst. and that has given me a chance of clearing off some of my arrears at Office and also of resting a bit. I needed it. The big bump on my elbow caused by my fall from the bike is mending splendidly. Your mother and I both suffer a little from indigestion but are otherwise very well.

I suppose it is indiscreet to talk of leave, but 5 months have passed and it would be grand if you could pop across in August or September. London will be the right place to come to. The flies will gather quickly.

It is not good taste to find fault with other people, - more particularly with the clergy, but I could not help enjoying the joke when I read that the Bishops met at Lambeth Palace and passed the resolution that it was the duty of the Church at the present time to preach the gospel! One would have thought the chaps had recognized that before they took orders! Dear old boys, - they mean well.

Here is another, - Fisher, Minister for Education remarked in the House of Commons, that a scheme contained omissions! Then Mr Burdett Coutts referred to Mr Fisher as being "perched on a pinnacle far below the ordinary member". These bulls were capped by Colonel Sir Mark Sykes who said, "When the political chickens come home to roost there will be a strange flutter in the dovecots"!

The remainder and conclusion of this letter is missing.