

September 1914



Headteacher's log

Monday 14

Curriculum delivery at the school is much changed since last term. However, under wartime conditions we are striving to maintain acceptable educational offerings. At the beginning of each day, all 88 of our children gather in the hall for the singing of 'God save the King'. What has changed, you ask, apart from the repetition of the national hymn? Two things are different. One is that I conduct this assembly without assistant teacher support. The other is that I and the children remain in the hall for most of each day. Rows of desks are set at right angles to the stage, and I teach all subjects to all years simultaneously using four blackboards.

Tuesday 15

My gallant colleagues have, in one way or another, rushed to the colours. Miss Oakenstaff surprised me most when she took Lord Kitchener's word for it that her country needed her. My militant suffragette deputy has used her feminist associations in high places to become First Secretary to the Marchioness of Swindon at a new section of the Admiralty, the Department of Underseas Affairs. And as the Marchioness has a record of not remaining below the surface for long, Miss Oakenstaff might soon succeed her as Minister with a seat in the House of Ladies. I wonder if she'll care as much as before about the voteless sisterhood.

Wednesday 16

Mr Peel, too, has put his talents at the service of his country by enlisting in the Toffeenose Light Dragoons. He was gazetted 2nd Lieutenant on the basis of his point-to-point experience, and appeared proudly booted, spurred and splendidly uniformed to say goodbye to his class. He told me that he hopes to see action before the war is over. Meanwhile, Miss Melinda Cartwright has entered service as a drum majorette in the Artists' Rifles, and Miss Nigella Bounder was interviewed in the *Slimepond Clarion* on the announcement that she is to become a spy. All my staff have distinguished themselves and their profession by their prompt volunteering, and the exuberant variety of their talents.

Thursday 17

The war has, of course, made a difference to the content as well as the delivery of the curriculum. Music includes the teaching of all the Allied national anthems, and Art focuses on painting British regimental uniforms. Geography is: 'Imperial', studying His Majesty's dominions sending troops to the defence of the Mother Country; and 'European', with daily map identification of battlefronts and targets. Arithmetic starts simply in Y1 by counting the shell-fire per minute of the main guns of the cruiser HMS Loamshire, rising to Y4 with hands-on calculations with ammunition belts (blanks) of a Vickers machine gun. Next term we will organise our work in themed projects, beginning with Serbia Month.

Friday 18

Canon Thunderton-Armstrong took assembly this morning, with prayers for the British generals who have such heavy responsibilities at this time. He was good enough to help me during the entire day with teaching in several subjects, including an RE lesson on King David's empire, and he got quite out of breath on lunchtime playground duty. After school, he confided that his pastoral support has been depleted above and below. His curate, Mr Smoothman, has become Archdeacon of Trotters Bottom, a new Archdeaconry near St Albans with oversight of the army nurses' national training camp. Meanwhile, Bishop Potsmoker has braved the U-boats to take a sabbatical at Lake Wobegon in Minnesota. In return for listening, I sought the Canon's counsel on a disturbing personal communication this morning – a white feather. He advised me to ...

■ Leonard Bookman

