

The following text is a transcript of a student reading at the University of Manchester's WWI Centenary Event, 25 November 2014. Each reading consists of a brief introduction, followed by correspondence between Professor Tout and students who were serving in WWI.

Student 3: The relationship between Tout and his students offer fascinating insights into the often hidden emotional history of the First World War. The need for continued links with home and their pre-war lives meant that students placed a high value on their association with Tout, the History School and the University. One element that is palpable in the correspondence is the central role that Tout played in the lives of his students, primarily as a provider of emotional support for young men and women who were dealing with the horrors of war. Another element, evident in the following letter from G S Baldwin, highlights the support that students fortunate enough to survive the Trenches sought from Tout as they looked to rebuild their lives in the post-war world.

Letter from G S Baldwin to Tout

8 December 1918

Dear Professor Tout,

I am pleased to be able to say that I have come safely through the whole show 'in one piece' and so far as I can judge none the worse for my experiences. As you will perhaps recall I joined the forces at once in August 1914, was seriously wounded in September 1915, and on recovery gained a commission in Feb. 1917 and have since that date served in France as an officer. Since February 1917 I continued to be again wounded, gassed and in addition blown up bodily three times and buried twice. Having then enjoyed sufficient excitement for a normal lifetime my ambition is to settle down as soon as possible in some less eventful sphere. The question that occupies my thought more and more is how and when to take up the threads dropped in 1914. I have no clear idea as to the position of men like myself in the scheme for demobilisation. I'm fully alive to all the difficulties and am not very clear as to the best way in which to approach them. I should therefore be very glad of an interview and your advice if possible. I am at present on leave from France and shall be at the home address from Tuesday. If you have an hour to spare on I could slip over to Manchester and should be very glad to do so.

END