

My War Experiences in Two Continents eBook

My War Experiences in Two Continents

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PREFACE

In presenting these extracts from the diaries of my aunt, the late Miss Macnaughtan, I feel it necessary to explain how they come to be published, and the circumstances under which I have undertaken to edit them.

After Miss Macnaughtan's death, her executors found among her papers a great number of diaries. There were twenty-five closely written volumes, which extended over a period of as many years, and formed an almost complete record of every incident of her life during that time.

It is amazing that the journal was kept so regularly, as Miss Macnaughtan suffered from writer's cramp, and the entries could only have been written with great difficulty. Frequently a passage is begun in the writing of her right, and finished in that of her left hand, and I have seen her obliged to grasp her pencil in her clenched fist before she was able to indite a line. In only one volume, however, do we find that she availed herself of the services of her secretary to dictate the entries and have them typed.



The executors found it extremely difficult to know how to deal with such a vast mass of material. Miss Macnaughtan was a very reserved woman.^{1} She lived much alone, and the diary was her only confidante. In one of her books she says that expression is the most insistent of human needs, and that the inarticulate man or woman who finds no outlet in speech or in the affections, will often keep a little locked volume in which self can be safely revealed. Her diary occupied just such a place in her own inner life, and for that reason one hesitates to submit its pages even to the most loving and sympathetic scrutiny.

But Miss Macnaughtan's diary fulfilled a double purpose. She used it largely as material for her books. Ideas for stories, fragments of plays and novels, are sketched in on spare sheets, and the pages are full of the original theories and ideas of a woman who never allowed anyone else to do her thinking for her. A striking sermon or book may be criticised or discussed, the pros and cons of some measure of social reform weighed in the balance; and the actual daily chronicle of her busy life, of her travels, her various experiences and adventures, makes a most interesting and fascinating tale.



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So much of the material was obviously intended to form the basis for an autobiography that the executors came to the conclusion that it would be a thousand pities to withhold it from the public, and at some future date it is very much hoped to produce a complete life of Miss Macnaughtan as narrated in her diaries. Meanwhile, however, the publisher considers that Miss Macnaughtan's war experiences are of immediate interest to her many friends and admirers, and I have been asked to edit those volumes which refer to her work in Belgium, at home, in Russia, and on the Persian front.

Except for an occasional word where the meaning was obscure, I have added nothing to the diaries. I have, of course, omitted such passages as appeared to be private or of family interest only; but otherwise I have contented myself with a slight rearrangement of some of the paragraphs, and I have inserted a few letters and extracts from letters, which give a more interesting or detailed account of some incident than is found in the corresponding entry in the diary. With these exceptions the book is published as Miss Macnaughtan wrote it. I feel sure that her own story of her experiences would lose much of its charm if I interfered with it, and for this reason I have preserved the actual diary form in which it was written.

To many readers of Miss Macnaughtan's books her diaries of the war may come as a slight surprise. There is a note of depression and sadness, and perhaps even of criticism, running through them, which is lacking in all her earlier writings. I would remind people that this book is the work of a dying woman; during the whole of the period covered by it, the author was seriously ill, and the horror and misery of the war, and the burden of a great deal of personal sorrow, have left their mark on her account of her experiences.

I should like to thank those relations and friends of Miss Macnaughtan who have allowed me to read and publish the letters incorporated in this book, and I gratefully acknowledge the help and advice I have received in my task from my mother, from my husband, and from Miss Hilda Powell, Mr. Stenning, and Mr. R. Sommerville. I desire also to express my gratitude to Mr. John Murray for many valuable hints and suggestions about the book, and for the trouble he has so kindly taken to help me to prepare it for the press.

Betty salmon.

ZILLEBEKE, *Waltham st. Lawrence,*
Twyford, Berkshire,
October, 1918.

MY WAR EXPERIENCES IN TWO CONTINENTS

PART I



BELGIUM

CHAPTER I

ANTWERP

On September 20th, 1914, I left London for Antwerp. At the station I found I had forgotten my passport and Mary had to tear back for it. Great perturbation, but kept this dark from the rest of the staff, for they are all rather serious and I am head of the orderlies. We got under way at 4 a.m. next morning. All instantly began to be sick. I think I was the worst and alarmed everybody within hearing distance. One more voyage I hope—home—then dry land for me.



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We arrived at Antwerp on the 22nd, twenty-four hours late. The British Consul sent carriages, *etc.*, to meet us. Drove to the large Philharmonic Hall, which has been given us as a hospital. Immediately after breakfast we began to unpack beds, *etc.*, and our enormous store of medical things; all feeling remarkably empty and queer, but put on heroic smiles and worked like mad. Some of the staff is housed in a convent and the rest in rooms over the Philharmonic Hall.

23 September.—Began to get things into order and to allot each person her task. Our unit consists of Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, its head; Doctors Rose Turner, F. Stoney, Watts, Morris, Hanson and Ramsey (all women); orderlies—me, Miss Randell (interpreter), Miss Perry, Dick, Stanley, Benjamin, Godfrey, {2} Donnisthorpe, Cunliffe, and Mr. Glade. Everyone very zealous and inclined to do anybody's work except their own. Keen competition for everyone else's tools, brooms, dusters, *etc.* Great roaming about. All mean well.

25 September.—Forty wounded men were brought into our hospital yesterday. Fortunately we had everything ready, but it took a bit of doing. We are all dead tired, and not so keen as we were about doing other people's work.

The wounded are not very bad, and have been sent on here from another hospital. They are enchanted with their quarters, which indeed do look uncommonly nice. One hundred and thirty beds are ranged in rows, and we have a bright counterpane on each and clean sheets. The floor is scrubbed, and the bathrooms, store, office, kitchens, and receiving-rooms have been made out of nothing, and look splendid. I never saw a hospital spring up like magic in this way before. There is a wide verandah where the men play cards, and a garden to stump about in.

The gratitude of our patients is boundless, and they have presented Mrs. Stobart with a beautiful basket of growing flowers. I do not think Englishmen would have thought of such a thing. They say they never tasted such cooking as ours outside Paris, and they are rioting in good food, papers, nice beds, *etc.* Nearly all of them are able to get out a little, so it is quite cheery nursing them. There is a lot to do, and we all fly about in white caps. The keenest competition is for sweeping out the ward with a long-handled hair brush!

[Page Heading: *The defences of the town*]

I went into the town to-day. It is very like every other foreign town, with broad streets and tram-lines and shops and squares, but to-day I had an interesting drive. I took a car and went out to the second line of forts. The whole place was a mass of wire entanglements, mined at every point, and the fields were studded with strong wooden spikes. There were guns everywhere, and in one place a whole wood and a village had been laid level with the ground to prevent the enemy taking cover. We heard the sound of firing last night!



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* * * * *

To Mrs. Keays-Young.

*Rue de L'HARMONIE 68, Antwerp,
25 September.*

Dearest Babe,

It was delightful getting your letter. Our wounded are all French or Belgians, but there is a bureau of enquiry in the town where I will go to try to hear tidings of your poor friends.

We heard the guns firing last night, and fifty wounded were sent in during the afternoon. In one day 2,500 wounded reached Antwerp. I can write this sort of thing to-day as I know my letter will be all right. To show you that the fighting is pretty near, two doctors went for a short motor drive to-day and they found two wounded men. One was just dying, the other they brought back in the car, but he died also. In the town itself everything seems much as usual except for crowds of refugees. Do not believe people when they say German barbarity is exaggerated. It is hideously true.

We are fearfully busy, and it seems a queer side of war to cook and race around and make doctors as comfortable as possible. We have a capital staff, who are made up of zeal and muscle. I do not know how long it can last. We breakfast at 7.30, which means that most of the orderlies are up at 5.45 to prepare and do everything. The fare is very plain and terribly wholesome, but hardly anyone grumbles. I am trying to get girls to take two hours off duty in the day, but they won't do it.

Have you any friends who would send us a good big lot of nice jam? It is for the staff. If you could send some cases of it at once to Miss Stear, 39, St. James's Street, London, and put my name on it, and say it is for our hospital, she will bring it here herself with some other things. Some of your country friends might like to help in a definite little way like this.

Your loving
Sarah.

— is going to England to-night and will take this.

* * * * *

27 September.—Yesterday, when we were in the town, a German airship flew overhead and dropped bombs. A lot of guns fired at it, but it was too high up to hit. The incident caused some excitement in the streets.

[Page Heading: *Arrival of wounded*]



Last night we heard that more wounded were coming in from the fighting-line near Ghent. We got sixty more beds ready, and sat up late, boiling water, sterilising instruments, preparing operating-tables and beds, *etc.*, *etc.* As it got later all the lights in the huge ward were put out, and we went about with little torches amongst the sleeping men, putting things in order and moving on tip-toe in the dark. Later we heard that the wounded might not get in till Monday.

The work of this place goes on unceasingly. We all get on well, but I have not got the communal spirit, and the fact of being a unit of women is not the side of it that I find most interesting. The communal food is my despair. I can *not* eat it. All the same this is a fine experience, and I hope we'll come well out of it. There is boundless opportunity, and we are in luck to have a chance of doing our darndest.

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28 September.—Last night I and two orderlies slept over at the hospital as more wounded were expected. At 11 p.m. word came that “les blesses” were at the gate. Men were on duty with stretchers, and we went out to the tram-way cars in which the wounded are brought from the station, twelve patients in each. The transit is as little painful as possible, and the stretchers are placed in iron brackets, and are simply unhooked when the men arrive. Each stretcher was brought in and laid on a bed in the ward, and the nurses and doctors undressed the men. We orderlies took their names, their “matricule” or regimental number, and the number of their bed. Then we gathered up their clothes and put corresponding numbers on labels attached to them—first turning out the pockets, which are filled with all manner of things, from tins of sardines to loaded revolvers. They are all very pockety, but have to be turned out before the clothes are sent to be baked.

We arranged everything, and then got Oxo for the men, many of whom had had nothing to eat for two days. They are a nice-looking lot of men and boys, with rather handsome faces and clear eyes. Their absolute exhaustion is the most pathetic thing about them. They fall asleep even when their wounds are being dressed. When all was made straight and comfortable for them, the nurses turned the lights low again, and stepped softly about the ward with their little torches.

A hundred beds all filled with men in pain give one plenty to think about, and it is during sleep that their attitudes of suffering strike one most. Some of them bury their heads in their pillows as shot partridges seek to bury theirs amongst autumn leaves. Others lie very stiff and straight, and all look very thin and haggard. I was struck by the contrast between the pillared concert-hall where they lie, with its platform of white paint and decorations, and the tragedy of suffering which now fills it.

At 2 a.m. more soldiers were brought in from the battlefield, all caked with dirt, and we began to work again. These last blinked oddly at the concert-hall and nurses and doctors, but I think they do not question anything much. They only want to go to sleep.

[Page Heading: *A visit from some deserters*]

I suppose that women would always be tender-hearted towards deserters. Three of them arrived at the hospital to-day with some absurd story about having been told to report themselves. We got them supper and a hot bath and put them to bed. One can't regret it. I never saw men sleep as they did. All through the noise of the wounded being brought in, all through the turned-up lights and bustle they never even stirred, but a sergeant discovered them, and at 3 a.m. they were marched away again. We got them breakfast and hot tea, and at least they had had a few hours between clean sheets. These men seem to carry so much, and the roads are heavy.



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At 5 o'clock I went to bed and slept till 8. Mrs. Stobart never rests. I think she must be made of some substance that the rest of us have not discovered. At 5 a.m. I discovered her curled up on a bench in her office, the doors wide open and the dawn breaking.

2 October.—Here is a short account of one whole day. Firing went on all night, sometimes it came so near that the vibration of it was rather startling. In the early morning we heard that the forts had been heavily fired on. One of them remained silent for a long time, and then the garrison lighted cart-loads of straw in order to deceive the Germans, who fell into the trap, thinking the fort was disabled and on fire, and rushed in to take it. They were met with a furious cannonade. But one of the other forts has fallen.

At 7 a.m. the men's bread had not arrived for their 6 o'clock breakfast, so I went into the town to get it. The difficulty was to convey home twenty-eight large loaves, so I went to the barracks and begged a motor-car from the Belgian officer and came back triumphant. The military cars simply rip through the streets, blowing their horns all the time. Antwerp was thronged with these cars, and each one contained soldiers. Sometimes one saw wounded in them lying on sacks stuffed with straw.

I came down to breakfast half-an-hour late (8 o'clock) and we had our usual fare—porridge, bread and margarine, and tea with tinned milk—amazingly nasty, but quite wholesome and filling at the price. We have reduced our housekeeping to ninepence per head per day. After breakfast I cleaned the two houses, as I do every morning, made nine beds, swept floors and dusted stairs, *etc.* When my rooms were done and jugs filled, our nice little cook gave me a cup of soup in the kitchen, as she generally does, and I went over to the hospital to help prepare the men's dinner, my task to-day being to open bottles and pour out beer for a hundred and twenty men; then, when the meat was served, to procure from the kitchen and serve out gravy. Our own dinner is at 12.30.

Afterwards I went across to the hospital again and arranged a few things with Mrs. Stobart. I began to correct the men's diagnosis sheets, but was called off to help with wounded arriving, and to label and sort their clothes. Just then the British Minister, Sir Francis Villiers, and the Surgeon-General, Sir Cecil Herslet, came in to see the hospital, and we proceeded to show them round, when the sound of firing began quite close to us and we rushed out into the garden.

[Page Heading: *A Taube overhead*]



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From out the blue, clear autumn sky came a great grey dove flying serenely overhead. This was a German aeroplane of the class called the Taube (dove). These aeroplanes are quite beautiful in design, and fly with amazing rapidity. This one wafted over our hospital with all the grace of a living creature “calm in the consciousness of wings,” and then, of course, we let fly at it. From all round us shells were sent up into the vast blue of the sky, and still the grey dove went on in its gentle-looking flight. Whoever was in it must have been a brave man! All round him shells were flying—one touch and he must have dropped. The smoke from the burst shells looked like little white clouds in the sky as the dove sailed away into the blue again and was seen no more.

We returned to our work in hospital. The men’s supper is at six o’clock, and we began cutting up their bread-and-butter and cheese and filling their bowls of beer. When that was over and visitors were going, an order came for thirty patients to proceed to Ostend and make room for worse cases. We were sorry to say good-bye to them, especially to a nice fellow whom we call Alfred because he can speak English, and to Sunny Jim, who positively refused to leave.

Poor boys! With each batch of the wounded, disabled creatures who are carried in, one feels inclined to repeat in wonder, “Can one man be responsible for all this? Is it for one man’s lunatic vanity that men are putting lumps of lead into each other’s hearts and lungs, and boys are lying with their heads blown off, or with their insides beside them on the ground?” Yet there is a splendid freedom about being in the midst of death—a certain glory in it, which one can’t explain.

A piece of shell fell through the roof of the hospital to-day—evidently a part of one that had been fired at the Taube. It fell close beside the bed of one of our wounded, and he went as white as a ghost. It must be pretty bad to be powerless and have shells falling around. The doctors tell me that nothing moves them so much as the terror of the men. Their nerves are simply shattered, and everything frightens them. Rather late a man was brought in from the forts, terribly wounded. He was the only survivor of twelve comrades who stood together, and a shell fell amongst them, killing all but this man.

At seven o’clock we moved all the furniture from Mrs. Stobart’s office to the dispensary, where she will have more room, and the day’s work was then over and night work began for some. The Germans have destroyed the reservoir and the water-supply has been cut off, so we have to go and fetch all the water in buckets from a well. After supper we go with our pails and carry it home. The shortage for washing, cleaning, *etc.*, is rather inconvenient, and adds to the danger in a large hospital, and to the risk of typhoid.

[Page Heading: *Orders to evacuate the hospital*]



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4 October.—Yesterday our work was hardly over when Mrs. Stobart sent a summons to all of us “heads” to come to her bureau. She had grave news for us. The British Consul had just been to say that all the English must leave Antwerp; two forts had fallen, and the Germans were hourly expected to begin shelling the town. We were told that all the wounded who could travel were to go to Ostend, and the worst cases were to be transferred to the Military Hospital.

I do not think it would be easy to describe the confusion that followed. All the men’s clothes had to be found, and they had to be got into them, and woe betide if a little cap or old candle was missing! All wanted serving at once; all wanted food before starting. In the midst of the general melee I shall always remember one girl, silently, quickly, and ceaselessly slicing bread with a loaf pressed to her waist, and handing it across the counter to the men.

With one or two exceptions the staff all wanted to remain in Antwerp. I myself decided to abandon the unit and stay on here as an individual or go to Ostend with the men. Mrs. Stobart, being responsible, had to take the unit home. It was a case of leaving immediately; we packed what stores we could, but the beds and X-ray apparatus and all our material equipment would have to be left to the Germans. I think all felt as though they were running away, but it was a military order, and the Consul, the British Minister, and the King and Queen were leaving. We went to eat lunch together, and as we were doing so Mrs. Stobart brought the news that the Consul had come to say that reinforcements had come up, the situation changed for the better, and for the present we might remain. Anyone who wanted to leave might do so, but only four did.

We have since heard what happened. The British Minister cabled home to say that Antwerp was the key to the whole situation and must not fall, as once in here the Germans would be strongly entrenched, supplied with provisions, ammunition, and everything they want. A Cabinet Council was held at 3 a.m. in London, and reinforcements were ordered up. Winston Churchill is here with Marines. They say Colonel Kitchener is at the forts.

The firing sounds very near. Dr. Hector Munro and Miss St. Clair and Lady Dorothy Fielding came over to-day from Ghent, where all is quiet. They wanted me to return with them to take a rest, which was absurd, of course.

Some fearful cases were brought in to us to-day. My God, the horror of it! One has heard of men whom their mothers would not recognise. Some of the wounded to-day were amongst these. All the morning we did what we could for them. One man was riddled with bullets, and died very soon.



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It is awful work. The great bell rings, and we say, "More wounded," and the men get stretchers. We go down the long, cold covered way to the gate and number the men for their different beds. The stretchers are stiff with blood, and the clothes have to be cut off the men. They cry out terribly, and their *horror* is so painful to witness. They are so young, and they have seen right into hell. The first dressings are removed by the doctors—sometimes there is only a lump of cotton-wool to fill up a hole—and the men lie there with their tragic eyes fixed upon one. All day a nurse has sat by a man who has been shot through the lungs. Each breath is painful; it does not bear writing about. The pity of it all just breaks one's heart. But I suppose we do not see nearly the worst of the wounded.

The lights are all off at eight o'clock now, and we do our work in the dark, while the orderlies hold little torches to enable the doctors to dress the wounds. There are not *half* enough nurses or doctors out here. In one hospital there are 400 beds and only two trained nurses.

[Page Heading: ARRIVAL OF BRITISH TROOPS]

Some of our own troops came through the town in London omnibuses to-day. It was quite a Moment, and we felt that all was well. We went to the gate and shook hands with them as they passed, and they made jokes and did us all good. We cheered and waved handkerchiefs.

5-6 October.—I think the last two days have been the most ghastly I ever remember. Every day seems to bring news of defeat. It is awful, and the Germans are quite close now. As I write the house shakes with the firing. Our troops are falling back, and the forts have fallen. Last night we took provisions and water to the cellars, and made plans to get the wounded taken there.

They say the town will be shelled to-morrow. All these last two days bleeding men have been brought in. To-day three of them died, and I suppose none of them was more than 23. We have to keep up all the time and show a good face, and meals are quite cheery. To-day, Tuesday, was our last chance of leaving, and only two went.

The guns boom by day as well as by night, and as each one is heard one thinks of more bleeding, shattered men. It is calm, nice autumn weather; the trees are yellow in the garden and the sky is blue, yet all the time one listens to the cries of men in pain. To-night I meant to go out for a little, but a nurse stopped me and asked me to sit by a dying man. Poor fellow, he was twenty-one, and looked like some brigand chief, and he smiled as he was dying. The horror of these two days will last always, and there are many more such days to come. Everyone is behaving well, and that is all I care about.

7 October.—It is a glorious morning: they will see well to kill each other to-day.



The guns go all day and all night. They are so close that the earth shakes with them. Last night in the infernal darkness we were turning wounded men away from the door. There was no room for them even on the floor. The Belgians scream terribly. Our own men suffer quite quietly. One of them died to-day.



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Day and night a stream of vehicles passes the gate. It never ceases. Nearly all are motors, driven at a furious pace, and they sound horns all the time. These are met by a stream of carts and old-fashioned vehicles bringing in country people, who are flying to the coast. In Antwerp to-day it was “sauve qui peut”! Nearly all the men are going—Mr. —, who has helped us, and Mr. —, they are going to bicycle into Holland. A surgeon (Belgian) has fled from his hospital, leaving seven hundred beds, and there seem to be a great many deserters from the trenches.

[Page Heading: THE SITUATION GETS WORSE]

The news is still the same—“very bad”; sometimes I walk to the gate and ask returning soldiers how the battle goes, but the answer never varies. At lunch-time to-day firing ceased, and I heard it was because the German guns were coming up. We got orders to send away all the wounded who could possibly go, and we prepared beds in the cellars for those who cannot be moved. The military authorities beg us to remain as so many hospitals have been evacuated.

The wounded continue to come in. One sees one car in the endless stream moving slowly (most of them *fly* with their officers sitting upright, or with aeroplanes on long carriages), and one knows by the pace that more wounded are coming. Inside one sees the horrible six shelves behind the canvas curtain, and here and there a bound-up limb or head. One of our men had his leg taken off to-day, and is doing well. Nothing goes on much behind the scenes. The yells of the men are plainly heard, and to-day, as I sat beside the lung man who was taking so long to die, someone brought a sack to me, and said, “This is for the leg.” All the orderlies are on duty in the hospital now. We can spare no one for rougher work. We can all bandage and wash patients. There are wounded everywhere, even on straw beds on the platform of the hall.

Darkness seems to fall early, and it is the darkness that is so baffling. At 5 p.m. we have to feed everyone while there is a little light, then the groping about begins, and everyone falls over things. There is a clatter of basins on the floor or an over-turned chair. Any sudden noise is rather trying at present because of the booming of the guns. At 7 last night they were much louder than before, with a sort of strange double sound, and we were told that these were our “Long Toms,” so we hope that our Naval Brigade has come up.

We know very little of what is going on except when we run out and ask some returning English soldiers for news. Yesterday it was always the same reply “Very bad.” One of the Marines told me that Winston Churchill was “up and down the road amongst the shells,” and I was also told that he had given orders that Antwerp was not to be taken till the last man in it was dead.

The Marines are getting horribly knocked about. Yesterday Mrs. O’Gormon went out in her own motor-car and picked wounded out of the trenches. She said that no one knew

why they were in the trenches or where they were to fire—they just lay there and were shot and then left.



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[Page Heading: HOW WE KEPT UP OUR COURAGE]

I think I have seen too much pain lately. At Walworth one saw women every day in utter pain, and now one lives in an atmosphere of bandages and blood. I asked some of the orderlies to-day what it was that supported them most at a crisis of this sort. The answers varied, and were interesting. I myself am surprised to find that religion is not my best support. When I go into the little chapel to pray it is all too tender, the divine Mother and the Child and the holy atmosphere. I begin to feel rather sorry for myself, I don't know why; then I go and move beds and feel better; but I have found that just to behave like a well-bred woman is what keeps me up best. I had thought that the Flag or Religion would have been stronger incentives to me.

Our own soldiers seem to find self-respect their best asset. It is amazing to see the difference between them and the Belgians, who are terribly poor hands at bearing pain, and beg for morphia all the time. An officer to-day had to have a loose tooth out. He insisted on having cocaine, and then begged the doctor to be careful!

The firing now is furious—sometimes there are five or six explosions almost simultaneously. I suppose we shall read in the *Times* that “all is quiet,” and in *Le Matin* that “pour le reste tout est calme.”

The staff are doing well. They are generally too busy to be frightened, but one has to speak once or twice to them before they hear.

On Wednesday night, the 7th October, we heard that one more ship was going to England, and a last chance was given to us all to leave. Only two did so; the rest stayed on. Mrs. Stobart went out to see what was to be done. The — Consul said that we were under his protection, and that if the Germans entered the town he would see that we were treated properly. We had a deliberately cheerful supper, and afterwards a man called Smits came in and told us that the Germans had been driven back fifteen kilometres. I myself did not believe this, but we went to bed, and even took off our clothes.

At midnight the first shell came over us with a shriek, and I went down and woke the orderlies and nurses and doctors. We dressed and went over to help move the wounded at the hospital. The shells began to scream overhead; it was a bright moonlight night, and we walked without haste—a small body of women—across the road to the hospital. Here we found the wounded all yelling like mad things, thinking they were going to be left behind. The lung man has died.

Nearly all the moving to the cellars had already been done—only three stretchers remained to be moved. One wounded English sergeant helped us. Otherwise everything was done by women. We laid the men on mattresses which we fetched from the hospital overhead, and then Mrs. Stobart's mild, quiet voice said, “Everything is to



go on as usual. The night nurses and orderlies will take their places. Breakfast will be at the usual hour.” She and the other ladies whose night it was to sleep at the convent then returned to sleep in the basement with a Sister.



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[Page Heading: THE BOMBARDMENT]

We came in for some most severe shelling at first, either because we flew the Red Cross flag or because we were in the line of fire with a powder magazine which the Germans wished to destroy. We sat in the cellars with one night-light burning in each, and with seventy wounded men to take care of. Two of them were dying. There was only one line of bricks between us and the shells. One shell fell into the garden, making a hole six feet deep; the next crashed through a house on the opposite side of the road and set it on fire. The danger was two-fold, for we knew our hospital, which was a cardboard sort of thing, would ignite like matchwood, and if it fell we should not be able to get out of the cellars. Some people on our staff were much against our making use of a cellar at all for this reason. I myself felt it was the safest place, and as long as we stayed with the wounded they minded nothing. We sat there all night.

The English sergeant said that at daybreak the firing would probably cease, as the German guns stopped when daylight came in order to conceal the guns. We just waited for daybreak. When it came the firing grew worse. The sergeant said, "It is always worse just before they stop," but the firing did not stop. Two hundred guns were turned on Antwerp, and the shells came over at the rate of four a minute. They have a horrid screaming sound as they come. We heard each one coming and wondered if it would hit us, and then we heard the crashing somewhere else and knew another shell was coming.

The worst cases among the wounded lay on the floor, and these wanted constant attention. The others were in their great-coats, and stood about the cellar leaning on crutches and sticks. We wrapped blankets round the rheumatism cases and sat through the long night. Sometimes when we heard a crash near by we asked "Is that the convent?" but nothing else was said. All spoke cheerfully, and there was some laughter in the further cellar. One little red-haired nurse enjoyed the whole thing. I saw her carry three wounded men in succession on her back down to the cellar. I found myself wishing that for me a shot would come and finish the horrible night. Still we all chatted and smiled and made little jokes. Once during that long night in the cellar I heard one wounded man say to another as he rolled himself round on his mattress, "Que les anglais sont comme il faut."

At six o'clock the convent party came over and began to prepare breakfast. The least wounded of the men began to steal away, and we were left with between thirty and forty of them. The difficulty was to know how to get away and how to remove the wounded, two of whom were nearly dead. Miss Benjamin went and stood at the gate, while the shells still flew, and picked up an ambulance. In this we got away six men, including the two dying ones. Mrs. Stobart was walking about for three hours trying to find anything on wheels to remove us and the wounded. At last we got a motor ambulance, and packed in twenty men—that was all it would hold. We told them to go as far as the bridge and send it back for us. It never came. Nothing seemed to come.

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The — Vice-Consul had told us we were under his protection, and he would, as a neutral, march out to meet the Germans and give us protection. But when we enquired we heard he had bolted without telling us. The next to give us protection was the — Field Hospital, who said they had a ship in the river and would not move without us. But they also left and said nothing.

We got dinner for the men, and then the strain began to be much worse. We had seven wounded and ourselves and not a thing in which to get out of Antwerp. I told Mrs. Stobart we must leave the wounded at the convent in charge of the Sisters, and this we did, telling them where to take them in the morning. The gay young nurses fetched them across on stretchers.

[Page Heading: FLIGHT]

About 5 o'clock the shelling became more violent, and three shells came with only an instant between each. Presently we heard Mrs. Stobart say, "Come at once," and we went out and found three English buses with English drivers at the door. They were carrying ammunition, and were the last vehicles to leave Antwerp. We got into them and lay on the top of the ammunition, and the girls began to light cigarettes! The noise of the buses prevented our hearing for a time the infernal sound of shells and our cannons' answering roar.

As we drove to the bridge many houses and sometimes a whole street was burning. No one seemed to care. No one was there to try and save anything. We drove through the empty streets and saw the burning houses, and great holes where shells had fallen, and then we got to the bridge and out of the line of fire.

We set out to walk towards Holland, but a Belgian officer got us some Red Cross ambulances, and into these we got, and were taken to a convent at St. Gilles, where we slept on the floor till 3 a.m. At 3 a message was brought, "Get up at once—things are worse." Everyone seemed to be leaving, and we got into the Red Cross ambulances and went to the station.

9 October.—We have been all day in the train in very hard third-class carriages with the R.M.L.I. The journey of fifty miles took from 5 o'clock in the morning, when we got away, till 12 o'clock at night, when we reached Ostend. The train hardly crawled. It was the longest I have ever seen. All Ostend was in darkness when we arrived—a German airship having been seen overhead. We always seem to be tumbling about in the dark. We went from one hotel to another trying to get accommodation, and at last (at the St. James's) they allowed us to lie on the floor of the restaurant. The only food they had for us was ten eggs for twenty-five hungry people and some brown bread, but they had champagne at the house, and I ordered it for everybody, and we made little speeches and tried to end on a good note.



10 October.—Mrs. Stobart took the unit back to England to-day. The wounded were found in a little house which the Red Cross had made over to them, and Dr. Ramsey, Sister Bailey, and the two nurses had much to say about their perilous journey. One man had died on the road, but the others all looked well. Their joy at seeing us was pathetic, and there was a great deal of handshaking over our meeting.



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[Page Heading: THE UNIT RETURNS TO ENGLAND]

Miss Donnithorpe and I got decent rooms at the Littoral Hotel, and brought our luggage there, and had baths, which we much needed. Dr. Hanson had got out of the train at Bruges to bandage a wounded man, and she was left behind, and is still lost. I suppose she has gone home. She is the doctor I like best, and she is one of the few whose nerves are not shattered. It was a sorry little party which Mrs. Stobart took back to England.

CHAPTER II

WITH DR. HECTOR MUNRO'S FLYING AMBULANCE CORPS

12 October.—Everyone has gone back to England except Sister Bailey and me. She is waiting to hand over the wounded to the proper department, and I am waiting to see if I can get on anywhere. It does seem so hard that when men are most in need of us we should all run home and leave them.

The noises and racket in Ostend are deafening, and there is panic everywhere. The boats go to England packed every time. I called on the Villiers yesterday, and heard that she is leaving on Tuesday. But they say that the British Minister dare not leave or the whole place would go wild with fear. Some ships lie close to us on the grey misty water, and the troops are passing along all day.

Later.—We heard to-night that the Germans are coming into Ostend to-morrow, so once more we fly like dust before a broom. It is horrible having to clear out for them.

I am trying to discover what courage really consists in. It isn't only a lack of imagination. In some people it is transcendent, in others it is only a sort of stupidity. If proper precautions were taken the need for courage would be much reduced—the "tight place" is so often the result of sheer muddle.

This evening Dr. Hector Munro came in from Ghent with his oddly-dressed ladies, and at first one was inclined to call them masqueraders in their knickerbockers and puttees and caps, but I believe they have done excellent work. It is a queer side of war to see young, pretty English girls in khaki and thick boots, coming in from the trenches, where they have been picking up wounded men within a hundred yards of the enemy's lines, and carrying them away on stretchers. Wonderful little Walkueres in knickerbockers, I lift my hat to you!

Dr. Munro asked me to come on to his convoy, and I gladly did so: he sent home a lady whose nerves were gone, and I was put in her place.

[Page Heading: ON THE ROAD TO DUNKIRK]



13 October.—We had an early muddy breakfast, at which everyone spoke in a high voice and urged others to hurry, and then we collected luggage and went round to see the General. Afterwards we all got into our motor ambulances *en route* for Dunkirk. The road was filled with flying inhabitants, and down at the dock wounded and well struggled to get on to the steamer. People were begging us for a seat in our ambulance, and well-dressed women were setting out to walk twenty miles to Dunkirk. The rain was falling heavily, and it was a dripping day when we and a lot of English soldiers found ourselves in the square in Dunkirk, where the few hotels are. We had an expensive lunch at a greasy restaurant, and then tried to find rooms.



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I began to make out of whom our party consists. There is Lady Dorothy Fielding—probably 22, but capable of taking command of a ship, and speaking French like a native; Mrs. Decker, an Australian, plucky and efficient; Miss Chisholm, a blue-eyed Scottish girl, with a thick coat strapped around her waist and a haversack slung from her shoulder; a tall American, whose name I do not yet know, whose husband is a journalist; three young surgeons, and Dr. Munro. It is all so quaint. The girls rule the company, carry maps and find roads, see about provisions and carry wounded.

We could not get rooms at Dunkirk and so came on to St. Malo les Bains, a small bathing-place which had been shut up for the winter. The owner of an hotel there opened up some rooms for us and got us some ham and eggs, and the evening ended very cheerily. Our party seems, to me, amazingly young and unprotected.

St. Malo les Bains. 14 October.—To-day I took a car into Dunkirk and bought some things, as I have lost nearly all I possess at Antwerp. In the afternoon I went to the dock to get some letters posted, and tramped about there for a long time. War is such a disorganizer. Nothing starts. No one is able to move because of wounded arms and legs; it seems to make the world helpless and painful. In minor matters one lives nearly always with damp feet and rather dirty and hungry. Drains are all choked, and one does not get much sleep. These are trifles, of course.

[Page Heading: WOMEN AT THE FRONT]

To-night, as we sat at dinner, a message was brought that a woman outside had been run over and was going to have a baby immediately in a tram-way shelter, so out we went and got one of our ambulances, and a young doctor with his fiancée went off with her. There was a lot of argument about where the woman lived, until one young man said, "Well, get in somehow, or the baby will have arrived." There is a simplicity about these tragic times, and nothing matters but to save people.

15 October.—To-day we went down to the docks to get a passage for Dr. Munro, who is going home for money. A German Taube flew overhead and men were firing rifles at it. An Englishman hit it, and down it came like a shot bird, so that was the end of a brave man, whoever he was, and it was a long drop, too, through the still autumn air. Guns have begun to fire again, so I suppose we shall have to move on once more. One does not unpack, and it is dangerous to part with one's linen to be washed.

Yesterday I heard a man—a man in a responsible position—say to a girl, "Tell me, please, how far we are from the firing-line." It was one of the most remarkable speeches I ever heard. I go to these girls for all my news. Lady Dorothy Fielding is our real commander, and everyone knows it. One hears on all sides, "Lady Dorothy, can you get us tyres for the ambulances? Where is the petrol?" "Do you know if the General will let us through?" "Have you



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been able to get us any stores?" "Ought we to have 'laissez-passer's' or not?" She goes to all the heads of departments, is the only good speaker of French, and has the only reliable information about anything. All the men acknowledge her position, and they say to me, "It's very odd being run by a woman; but she is the only person who can do anything." In the firing-line she is quite cool, and so are the other women. They seem to be interested, not dismayed, by shots and shrapnel.

16 October.—To-day I have been reading of the "splendid retreat" of the Marines from Antwerp and their "unprecedented reception" at Deal. Everyone appears to have been in a state of wild enthusiasm about them, and it seems almost like Mafeking over again.

What struck me most about these men was the way in which they blew their own trumpets in full retreat and while flying from the enemy. We travelled all day in the train with them, and had long conversations with them all. They were all saying, "We will bring you the Kaiser's head, miss"; to which I replied, "Well, you had better turn round and go the other way." Some people like this "English" spirit. I find the conceit of it most trying. Belgium is in the hands of the enemy, and we flee before him singing our own praises loudly as we do so. The Marines lost their kit, spent one night in Antwerp, and went back to England, where they had an amazing reception amid scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm! The Government will give them a fresh kit, and the public will cheer itself hoarse!

[Page Heading: MEN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN]

I could not help thinking, when I read the papers to-day, of our tired little body of nurses and doctors and orderlies going back quietly and unproclaimed to England to rest at Folkestone for three days and then to come out here again. They had been for eighteen hours under heavy shell fire without so much as a rifle to protect them, and with the immediate chance of a burning building falling about them. The nurses sat in the cellars tending wounded men, whom they refused to leave, and then hopped on to the outside of an ammunition bus "to see the fun," and came home to buy their little caps and aprons out of their own slender purses and start work again.

I shall believe in Britishers to the day of my death, and I hope I shall die before I cease to believe in them, but I do get some disillusion. At Antwerp not a man remained with us, and the worst of it was they made elaborate excuses for leaving. Even our sergeant, who helped during the night, took a comrade off in the morning and disappeared. Both were wounded, but not badly, and two young English Tommies, very slightly wounded, left us as soon as the firing began. We saw them afterwards at the bridge, and they looked pretty mean.



To-night at dinner some officers came in when the food was pretty well finished, and only some drumsticks of chicken and bits of ham were left. I am always slow at beginning to eat, and I had a large wing of chicken still on my plate. I offered this to an officer, who accepted it and ate it, although he asked me to have a little bit of it. I do hope I shall meet some cases of chivalry soon.



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Firing ceased about 5 o'clock this afternoon, but we are short of news. The English papers rather annoy one with their continual victories, of which we see nothing. Everyone talks of the German big guns as if they were some happy chance. But the Germans were drilling and preparing while we were making speeches at Hyde Park Corner. Everything had been thought out by them. People talk of the difficulty they must have had in preparing concrete floors for their guns. Not a bit of it. There were innocent dwelling-houses, built long ago, with floors in just the right position and of just the right stuff, and when they were wanted the top stories were blown off and the concrete gun-floors were ready. There were local exhibitions, too, to which firms sent exhibition guns, which they "forgot" to remove! While we were going on strike they were making an army, and as we have sown so must we reap.

One almost wonders whether it might not be possible to eliminate the personal element in war, so constant is the talk about victorious guns. If guns decide everything, then let them be trained on other guns. Let the gun that drives farthest and goes surest win. If every siege is decided by the German 16-inch howitzers, then let us put up brick and mortar or steel against them, but not men. The day for the bleeding human body seems to be over now that men are mown down by shells fired eight miles away. War used to be splendid because it made men strong and brave, but now a little German in spectacles can stand behind a Krupp gun and wipe out a regiment.

[Page Heading: PROTECTION OF LIFE OR PROPERTY]

I suppose women will always try to protect life because they know what it costs to produce it, and men will always try to protect property because that is what they themselves produce. At Antwerp our wounded men were begging us to go up to the hospital to fetch their purses from under their pillows! At present women are only repairers, darning socks, cleaning, washing up after men, bringing up reinforcements in the way of fresh life, and patching up wounded men, but some day they must and will have to say, "The life I produce has as much right to protection as the property you produce, and I claim my right to protect it."

There seems to me a lack of connection between one man's desire to extend the area he occupies and young men in their teens lying with their lungs shot through or backs blown off.

19 October.—Our time is now spent in waiting and preparing for work which will probably come soon, as there has been fighting near us again. One hears the boom of guns a long way off, and always there is the sound of death in it. One has been too near it not to know now what it means.

Yesterday I went to church in an empty little building, but a few of our hospital men turned up and made a small congregation. In the afternoon one or two people came to

tea in my bedroom as we could not make our usual expedition to de Poorter's bunshop. The pastry habit is growing on us all.



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We went to the arsenal to-day to see about some repairs to our ambulances. I saw a German omnibus which had been captured, and the eagles on it had been painted out with stripes of red paint and the French colours put in their place. The omnibus was one mass of bullet-holes. I have seen waggons at Paardeberg, but I never saw anything so knocked about as that grey motor-bus. The engines and sides were shattered and the chauffeur, of course, had been killed. We went on by motor to the "Champs des Aviateurs." We saw one naval aeroplane man, who told us that he had been hit in his machine when it was 4,000 feet up in the air. His jacket was torn by a bullet and his machine dropped, but he was uninjured, and got away on a bicycle.

The more I see of war the more I am amazed at the courage and nerve which are shown. Death or the chance of death is everywhere, and we meet it not as fatalists do or those who believe they can earn eternal glory with a sacrifice, but lightly and with a song. An English girl at Antwerp was horribly ashamed of some Belgians who skulked behind a wall when the firing was hottest. She herself remained in the open.

It has been a great comfort to me that I have had a room to myself so far on this campaign. I find the communal spirit is not in me. The noisy meals, the heavy bowls of soup, the piles of labelled dinner-napkins, give me an unexpected feeling of oppressive seclusion and solitude, and only when I get away by myself do I feel that my soul is restored.

Mr. Gleeson, an American, joined his wife here a couple of days ago: it was odd to have a book talk again.

21 October.—A still grey day with a level sea and a few fishing-boats going out with the tide. On the long grey shore shrimpers are wading with their nets. The only colour in the soft grey dawn is the little wink of white that the breaking waves make on the sand. This small empty seaside place, with its row of bathing-machines drawn up on the beach, has a look about it as of a theatre seen by daylight. All the seats are empty and the players have gone away, and the theatre begins to whisper as empty buildings do. I think I know quite well some of the people who come to St. Malo les Bains, just by listening to what the empty little place is saying.

Firing has begun again. We hear that our ships are shelling Ostend from the sea. The news that reaches us is meagre, but I prefer that to the false reports that are circulated at home.

[Page Heading: WE GO TO FURNES]

This afternoon we came out in motors and ambulances to establish ourselves at Furnes in an empty Ecclesiastical College. Nothing was ready, and everything was in confusion. The wounded from the fighting near by had not begun to come in, but the infernal sound of the guns was quite close to us, and gave one the sensation of a blow



on the ear. Night was falling as we came back to Dunkirk to sleep (for no beds were ready at Furnes), and we passed many motor vehicles of every description going out to Furnes. Some of them were filled with bread, and one saw stacks of loaves filling to the roof some once beautifully appointed motor. Now all was dust and dirt.



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All my previous ideas of men marching to war have had a touch of heroism, crudely expressed by quick-step and smart uniforms. To-day I see tired dusty men, very hungry looking and unshaved, slogging along, silent and tired, and ready to lie down whenever chance offers. They keep as near their convoy as they can, and are keen to stop and cook something. God! what is heroism? It baffles me.

22 October. Furnes.—The bulk of our party did not return from Furnes yesterday, so we gathered that the wounded must be coming in, and we left Dunkirk early and came here. As I packed my things and rolled my rugs at 5 a.m. I thought of Mary, and “Charles to fetch down the luggage,” and the fuss at home over my delicate health!

A French officer called Gilbert took us out to Furnes in his Brooklands racing-car, so that was a bit of an experience too, for we sat curled up on some luggage, and were told to hang on by something. The roads were empty and level, the little seats of the car were merely an appendage to its long big engines. When we got our breath back we asked Gilbert what his speed had been, and he told us 75 miles an hour.

There was a crowd of motors in the yard of the Ecclesiastical College at Furnes, engines throbbing and clutches being jerked, and we were told that all last night the fighting had gone on and the wounded had been coming in. There are three wards already fairly full, nothing quite ready, and the inevitable and reiterated “where” heard on every side.

“Where are the stretchers?” “Where are my forceps?” “Where are we to dine?” “Where are the dead to be put?” “Where are the Germans?”

No one stops to answer. People ask everybody ten times over to do the same thing, and use anything that is lying about.

[Page Heading: THE FIGHTING AT DIXMUDE]

There are two war correspondents here—Mr. Gibbs and Mr. Ashmead Bartlett—and they told me about the fighting at Dixmude last night. I must try to get Mr. Gibbs’s newspaper account of it, but nothing will ever be so simple and so dramatic as his own description. He and Mr. Bartlett, Mr. Gleeson and Dr. Munro, with young Mr. Brockville, the War Minister’s son, went to the town, which was being heavily shelled. Dixmude was full of wounded, and the church and the houses were falling. The roar of things was awful, and the bursting shells overhead sent shrapnel pattering on the buildings, the pavements, and the cars.

Young Brockville went into a house, where he heard wounded were lying, and found a pile of dead Frenchmen stacked against a wall. A bursting shell scattered them. He went on to a cellar and found some living men, got the stretchers, loaded the cars and bade them drive on. In the darkness, and with the deafening noises, no one heard his

orders aright, the two motor ambulances moved on and left him behind amongst the burning houses and flying shells. It was only after going a few miles that the rest of the party found that he was not with them.



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Mr. Gleeson and Mr. Bartlett went back for him. Nothing need be said except that. They went back to hell for him, and the other two waited in the road with the wounded men. After an hour of waiting these two also went back.

I asked Mr. Gibbs if he shared the contempt that some people expressed for bullets. He and Mr. Gleeson both said, "Anyone who talks of contempt for bullets is talking nonsense. Bullets mean death at every corner of the street, and death overhead and flying limbs and unspeakable sights." All these men went back. All of them behaved quietly and like gentlemen, but one man asked a friend of his over and over again if he was a Belgian refugee, and another said that a town steeple falling looked so strange that they could only stand about and light cigarettes. In the end they gave up Mr. Brockville for lost and came home with the ambulances. But he turned up in the middle of the night, to everyone's huge delight.

23 October.—A crisp autumn morning, a courtyard filled with motors and brancardiers and men in uniform, and women in knickerbockers and puttees, all lighting cigarettes and talking about repairs and gears and a box of bandages. The mornings always start happily enough. The guns are nearer to-day or more distant, the battle sways backwards and forwards, and there is no such thing as a real "base" for a hospital. We must just stay as long as we can and fly when we must.

About 10 a.m. the ambulances that have been out all night begin to come in, the wounded on their pitiful shelves.

"Take care. There are two awful cases. Step this way. The man on the top shelf is dead. Lift them down. Steady. Lift the others out first. Now carry them across the yard to the overcrowded ward, and lay them on the floor if there are no beds, but lay them down and go for others. Take the worst to the theatre: get the shattered limbs amputated and then bring them back, for there is a man just dead whose place can be filled; and these two must be shipped off to Calais; and this one can sit up."

[Page Heading: A WOUNDED GERMAN]

I found one young German with both hands smashed. He was not ill enough to have a bed, of course, but sat with his head fallen forward trying to sleep on a chair. I fed him with porridge and milk out of a little bowl, and when he had finished half of it he said, "I won't have any more. I am afraid there will be none for the others." I got a few cushions for him and laid him in a corner of the room. Nothing disturbs the deep sleep of these men. They seem not so much exhausted as dead with fatigue.

A French boy of sixteen is a favourite of mine. He is such a beautiful child, and there is no hope for him; shot through the abdomen; he can retain nothing, and is sick all day, and every day he is weaker.

I do not find that the men want to send letters or write messages. Their pain is too awful even for that, and I believe they can think of nothing else.



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All day the stretchers are brought in and the work goes on. It is about 5 o'clock that the weird tired hour begins when the dim lamps are lighted, and people fall over things, and nearly everything is mislaid, and the wounded cry out, and one steps over forms on the floor. From then till one goes to bed it is difficult to be just what one ought to be, the tragedy of it is too pitiful. There is a boy with his eyes shot out, and there is a row of men all with head wounds from the cruel shrapnel overhead. Blood-stained mattresses and pillows are carried out into the courtyard. Two ladies help to move the corpses. There is always a pile of bandages and rags being burnt, and a youth stirs the horrible pile with a stick. A queer smell permeates everything, and the guns never cease. The wounded are coming in at the rate of a hundred a day.

The Queen of the Belgians called to see the hospital to-day. Poor little Queen, coming to see the remnants of an army and the remnants of a kingdom! She was kind to each wounded man, and we were glad of her visit, if for no other reason than that some sort of cleaning and tidying was done in her honour. To-night Mr. Nevinson arrived, and we went round the wards together after supper. The beds were all full—so was the floor. I was glad that so many of the wounded were dying.

The doctors said, "These men are not wounded, they are mashed."

I am rather surprised to find how little the quite young girls seem to mind the sight of wounds and suffering. They are bright and witty about amputations, and do not shudder at anything. I am feeling rather out-of-date amongst them.

* * * * *

[Page Heading: THE TRAGEDY OF PAIN]

Letter to Miss Macnaughtan's Sisters.

DR. HECTOR MUNRO'S AMBULANCE,
FURNES, BELGIUM,
23 October.

MY DEAR PEOPLE,

I think I may get this posted by a war correspondent who is going home, but I never know whether my letters reach you or not, for yours, if you write them, never reach me. I can't begin to tell you all that is happening, and it is really beyond what one is able to describe. The tragedy of pain is the thing that is most evident, and there is the roar and the racket of it and the everlasting sound of guns. The war seems to me now to mean nothing but torn limbs and stretchers. All the doctors say that never have they seen men so wounded.



The day that we got here was the day that Dixmude was bombarded, and our ten ambulances (motor) went out to fetch in wounded. These were shoved in anywhere, dying and dead, and our men went among the shells with buildings falling about them and took out all they could. Except where the fire is hottest one woman goes with each car. So far I have been doing ward work, but one of the doctors is taking me on an ambulance this afternoon. Most of the women who go are very good chauffeurs themselves, so they are chosen before a person who can't drive. They are splendid creatures, and funk nothing, and they are there to do a little dressing if it is needed.



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The firing is awfully heavy to-day. They say it is the big French guns that have got up. Two of our ambulances have had miraculous escapes after being hit. Things happen too quickly to know how to describe them. To-day when I went out to breakfast an old village woman aged about 70 was brought in wounded in two places. I am not fond of horrors.

We have been given an empty house for the staff, the owners having quitted it in a panic and left everything, children's toys on the carpet, and beds unmade. The hospital is a college for priests, all of whom have fled. Into this building the wounded are carried day and night, and the surgeons are working in shifts and can't get the work done. We are losing, alas! so many patients. Nothing can be done for them, and I always feel so glad when they are gone. I don't think anyone can realise what it is to be just behind the line of battle, and I fear there would not be much recruiting if people at home could see our wards. One can only be thankful for a hospital like this in the thick of things, for we are saving lives, and not only so, but saving the lives of men who perhaps have lain three days in a trench or a turnip-field undiscovered and forgotten.

As soon as a wounded man has been attended to and is able to be put on a stretcher again he is sent to Calais. We have to keep emptying the wards for other patients to come in, and besides, if the fighting comes this way, we shall have to fall back a little further.

We have a river between us and the Germans, so we shall always know when they are coming and get a start and be all right.

Your loving
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

* * * * *

25 October.—A glorious day. Up in the blue even Taubes—those birds of prey—look beautiful, like eagles wheeling in their flight. It is all far too lovely to leave, yet men are killing each other painfully with every day that dawns.

I had a tiresome day in spite of the weather, because the hospital was evacuated suddenly owing to the nearness of the Germans, and I missed going with the ambulance, so I hung about all day.

26 October. My birthday.—This morning several women were brought in horribly wounded. One girl of sixteen had both legs smashed. I was taking one old woman to the civil hospital and I had to pass eighteen dead men; they were laid out beside some women who were washing clothes, and I noticed how tired even in death their poor dirty feet looked.



[Page Heading: TO THE EDGE OF THE FIGHTING LINE]

We started early in the ambulance to-day, and went to pick up the wounded. It was a wild gusty morning, one of those days when the sky takes up nearly all the picture and the world looks small. The mud was deep on the road, and a cyclist corps plunged heavily along through it. The car steered badly and we drove to the edge of the fighting-line.

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First one comes to a row of ammunition vans, with men cooking breakfast behind them. Then come the long grey guns, tilted at various angles, and beyond are the shells bursting and leaving little clouds of black or white in the sky. We signalled to a gun not to fire down the road in much the same way as a bobby signals to a hansom. When we got beyond the guns they fired over us with a long streaky sort of sound. We came back to the road and picked up the wounded wherever we could find them.

The churches are nearly all filled with straw, the chairs piled anywhere, and the sacrament removed from the altar. In cottages and little inns it is the same thing—a litter of straw, and men lying on it in the chilly weather. Here and there through some little window one sees surgeons in their white coats dressing wounds. Half the world seems to be wounded and inefficient. We filled our ambulance, and stood about in curious groups of English men and women who looked as if they were on some shooting-party. When our load was complete we drove home.

Dr. Munro told me that last night he met a German prisoner quite naked being marched in, proudly holding his head up. Lots of the men fight naked in the trenches. In hospital we meet delightful German youths.

Amongst others who were brought in to-day was Mr. "Dick" Reading, the editor of a sporting paper. He was serving in the Belgian army, and was behind a gun-carriage when it was fired upon and started. Reading clung on behind with both his legs broken, and he stuck to it till the gun-carriage was pulled up! He came in on a stretcher as bright as a button, smoking a cigar and laughing.

[Page Heading: POPERINGHE]

Late this afternoon we had to turn out of Furnes and fly to Poperinghe. The drive was intensely interesting, through crowds of troops of every nationality, and the town seemed large and well lighted. It was crowded with people to see all our ambulances arrive. We went to a cafe, where there was a fire but nothing to eat, so some of the party went out and bought chops, and I cooked them in a stuffy little room which smelt of burnt fat.

After supper we went to a convent where the Queen of the Belgians had made arrangements for us to sleep. It was delightful. Each of us had a snowy white bed with white curtains in a long corridor, and there was a basin of water, cold but clean, and a towel for each of us. We thoroughly enjoyed our luxuries.

28 October.—The tide of battle seems to have swung away from us again and we were recalled to Furnes to-day. The hospital looked very bare and empty as all the patients had been evacuated, and there was nothing to do till fresh ones should come in. Three shells came over to-day and landed in a field near us. Some people say they were sent

by our own naval guns firing wide. The souvenir grafters went out and got pieces of them.

[Page Heading: DUNKIRK]



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2 November.—I have been spending a couple of nights in Dunkirk, where I went to meet Miss Fyfe. The *Invicta* got in late because the *Hermes* had been torpedoed and they had gone to her assistance. No doubt the torpedo was intended for the *Invicta*, which carries ammunition, and is becoming an unpopular boat in consequence. Forty of the *Hermes* men were lost.

Dunkirk is full of people, and one meets friends at every turn. I had tea at the Consulate one afternoon, and was rather glad to get away from the talk of shells and wounds, which is what one hears most of at Furnes.

I saw Lord Kitchener in the town one day; he had come to confer with Joffre, Sir John French, Monsieur Poincare, and Mr. Churchill, at a meeting held at the Chapeau Rouge Hotel. Rather too many valuable men in one room, I thought—especially with so many spies about! Three men in English officers' uniforms were found to be Germans the other day and taken out and shot.

The Duchess of Sutherland has a hospital at our old Casino at Malo les Bains, and has made it very nice. I had a long chat with a Coldstream man who was there. He told me he was carried to a barn after being shot in the leg and the bone shattered. He lay there for six days before he was found, with nothing to eat but a few biscuits. He dressed his own wound.

“But,” he said, “the string of my puttee had been driven in so far by the shot I couldn't find it to get the thing off, so I had to bandage over it.”

I went down to the station one day to see if anything could be done for the wounded there. They are coming in at the rate of seven hundred a day, and are laid on straw in an immense goods-shed. They get nothing to eat, and the atmosphere is so bad that their wounds can't be dressed. They are all patient, as usual, only the groans are heartbreaking sometimes. We are arranging to have soup given to them, and a number of ambulance men arrived who will remove them to hospital ships and trains. But the goods-shed is a shambles, and let us leave it at that.[1]

[1] It must not be thought that in this and in subsequent passages referring to the sufferings of the wounded Miss Macnaughtan alludes to any hardships endured by British troops. Her time in Flanders was all spent behind the French and Belgian lines.—ED.

Mrs. Knocker came into Dunkirk for a night's rest while I was staying there. She had been out all the previous day in a storm of wind and rain driving an ambulance. It was heavy with wounded, and shells were dropping very near. She—the most courageous woman that ever lived—was quite unnerved at last. The glass of the car she was driving was dim with rain and she could carry no lights, and with this swaying load of injured men behind her on the ruddy road she had to stick to her wheel and go on.

Some one said to her, "There is a doctor in such-and-such a farmhouse, and he has no dressings. You must take him these."



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She demurred (a most unusual thing for her), but men do not protect women in this war, and they said she had to take them. She asked one of the least wounded of the men to get down and see what was in front of her, and he disappeared altogether. The dark mass she had seen in the road was a huge hole made by a shell! After steering into dead horses and going over awful roads Mrs. Knocker came bumping into the yard, steering so badly that they ran to see what was wrong, and they found her fainting, and she was carried into the house. At Dunkirk she got a good dinner and a night's rest.

Furnes. 5 November.—The hospital is beginning to fill up again, and the nurses are depressed because only those cases which are nearly hopeless are allowed to stay, so it is death on all sides and just a hell of suffering. One man yelled to me to-night to kill him. I wish I might have done so. The tragedy of war presses with a fearful weight after being in a hospital, and wherever one is one hears the infernal sound of the guns. On Sunday about forty shells came into Furnes, but I was at Dunkirk. This morning about five dropped on to the station.

[Page Heading: NIEUPOORT]

To-day I went out to Nieuport. It is like some town one sees in a horrible nightmare. Hardly a house is left standing, but that does not describe the scene. Nothing can fitly describe it except perhaps such a pen as Victor Hugo's. The cathedral at Nieuport has two outer walls left standing. The front leans forward helplessly, the aisles are gone. The trees round about are burnt up and shot away. In the roadway are great holes which shells have made. The very cobbles of the street are scattered by them. Not a window remains in the place; all are shattered and many hang from their frames. The fronts of the houses have fallen out, and one sees glimpses of wretched domestic life: a baby's cradle hangs in mid-air, some tin boxes have fallen through from the box-room in the attic to the ground floor. Shops are shivered and their contents strewn on all sides; the interiors of other houses have been hollowed out by fire. There is a toy-shop with dolls grinning vacantly at the ruins or bobbing brightly on elastic strings.

In a wretched cottage some soldiers are having breakfast at a fine-carved table. In one house, surrounded by a very devastation of wreckage, some cheap ornaments stand intact on a mantelpiece. From another a little ginger-coloured cat strolls out unconcernedly! The bedsteads hanging midway between floors look twisted and thrawn—nothing stands up straight. Like the wounded, the town has been rendered inefficient by war.



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6 November.—Furnes always seems to me a weird tragic place. I cannot think why this is so, but its influence is to me rather curious. I feel as if all the time I was living in some blood-curdling ghost story or a horrid dream. Every day I try to overcome the feeling, but I can't succeed. This afternoon I made up my mind to return to our villa and write my diary. The day was lovely, and I meant to enjoy a rest and a scribble, but so strong was the horrid influence of the place that I couldn't settle to anything. I can't describe it, but it seemed to stifle me, and I can only compare it to some second sight in which one sees death. I sat as long as I could doing my writing, but I had to give in at last, and I tucked my book under my arm and walked back to the hospital, where at least I was with human beings and not ghosts.

Our life here is made up of many elements and many people, all rather incongruous, but the average of human nature is good. A villa belonging to a Dr. Joos was given to our staff. It is a pretty little house, with three beds in it, and we are eighteen people, so most of us sleep on the floor. It wouldn't be a bad little place (except for the drains) if only there wasn't this horrid influence about it all. I always particularly dislike toddling after people like a little lost dog, but here I find that unless I am with somebody the ghosts get the better of me.

The villa is being ruined by us I fear, but I have a woman to clean it, and I am trying to keep it in order. It is a cold little place for we have no fires. We can, by pumping, get a little very cold water, and there is a tap in the bath-room and one basin at which everyone tries to wash and shave at the same time. We get our meals at a butcher's shop, where there is a large room which we more than fill. The lights of the town are all out by 6 o'clock, so we grope about, but there is a lamp in our dining-room. When we come out we have to pass through the butcher's shop, and one may find oneself running into the interior of a sheep.

We get up about 7 o'clock and fight for the basin. Then we walk round to the butcher's shop and have breakfast at 7.30. Most people think they start off for the day's work at 8, but it is generally quite 10 o'clock before all the brown-hooded ambulances with their red crosses have moved out of the yard. We do not as a rule meet again till dinner-time, and even then many of the party are absent. They come in at all times, very dirty and hungry, and the greeting is always the same, "Did you get many?"—*i.e.*, "Have you picked up many wounded?"

One night Dr. Munro got bowled over by the actual air force created by a shell, which however did not hit him. Yesterday Mr. Secher was shot in the leg. I am amazed that not more get hit. They are all very cheery about it.

To-day we heard that a jolly French boy with white teeth, who has been very good at making coffee at our picnic lunches, was put up against a tree and shot at daybreak. Someone had made him drunk the night before, and he had threatened an officer with a revolver.



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[Page Heading: A DRAMATIC INCIDENT]

7 November. St. Malo les Bains.—Lady Bagot turned up here to-day, and I lunched with her at the Hotel des Arcades. Just before lunch a bomb was dropped from a Taube overhead, and hardly had we sat down to lunch when a revolver shot rang through the room. A French officer had discharged his pistol by mistake, and he lay on the floor in his scarlet trews. The scene was really the Adelphi, and as the man had only slightly hurt himself one was able to appreciate the scenic effect and to notice how well staged it was. A waiter ran for me. I ran for dressings to one of our ambulances, and we knelt in the right attitude beside the hero in his scarlet clothes, while the “lady of the bureau” begged for the bullet!

In the evening Lady Bagot and I worked at the railway-sheds till 3 a.m. One immense shed had 700 wounded in it. The night scene, with its inevitable accompaniment of low-turned lamps and gloom, was one I shall not forget. The railway-lines on each side of the covered platform were spread with straw, and on this wounded men, bedded down like cattle, slept. There were rows of them sleeping feet to feet, with straw over them to make a covering. I didn't hear a grumble, and hardly a groan. Most of them slept heavily.

Near the door was a row of Senegalese, their black faces and gleaming eyes looking strange above the straw; and further on were some Germans, whom the French authorities would not allow our men to touch; then rows of men of every colour and blood; Zouaves, with their picturesque dress all grimed and colourless; Turcos, French, and Belgians. Nearly all had their heads and hands bound up in filthy dressings. We went into the dressing-station at the far end of the great shed and dressed wounds till about 3 o'clock, then we passed through the long long lines of sleeping wounded men again and went home.

* * * * *

To Lady Clementine Waring.

8 November. MY DEAREST CLEMMIE,

I have a big job for you. Will you do it? I know you are the person for it, and you will be prompt and interested.

The wounded are suffering from hunger as much as from their wounds. In most places, such as dressing-stations and railway-stations, nothing is provided for them at all, and many men are left for two or three days without food.

I wish I could describe it all to you! These wounded men are picked up after a fight and taken anywhere—very often to some farmhouse or inn, where a Belgian surgeon claps



something on to the wounds or ties on a splint, and then our (Dr. Munro's) ambulances come along and bring the men into the Field Hospital if they are very bad, or if not they are taken direct to a station and left there. They may, and often do, have to wait for hours till a train loads up and starts. Even those who are brought to the Field Hospital have to turn

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out long before they can walk or sit, and they are carried to the local station and put into covered horse-boxes on straw, and have to wait till the train loads up and starts. You see everything has to be done with a view to sudden evacuation. We are so near to the firing-line that the Germans may sweep on our way at any time, and then every man has to be cleared out somehow (we have a heap of ambulances), and the staff is moved off to some safer place. We did a bolt of this sort to Poperinghe one day, but after being there two days the fighting swayed the other way and we were able to come back.

[Page Heading: HUNGER OF THE WOUNDED]

Well, during all these shiftings and waitings the wounded get nothing to eat. I want some travelling-kitchens, and I want you to see about the whole thing. You may have to come from Scotland, because I have opened the subject with Mr. Burbidge, of Harrods' Stores. A Harrods' man is over here. He takes back this letter. I particularly want you to see him. Mr. Burbidge has, or can obtain, old horse-vans which can be fitted up as travelling-kitchens. He is doing one now for Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland; it is to cost L15, which I call very cheap. I wish you could see it, for I know you could improve upon it. It is fitted, I understand, with a copper for boiling soup, and a chimney. There is also a place for fuel, and I should like a strong box that would hold vegetables, dried peas, *etc.*, whose top would serve as a table. Then there must be plenty of hooks and shelves where possible, and I believe Burbidge makes some sort of protection against fire in the way of lining to the van. Harrods' man says that he doesn't know if they have any more vans or not.

I want someone with push and energy to see the thing right through and get the vans off. The *Invicta*, from the Admiralty Pier, Dover, sailing daily, brings Red Cross things free.

[Page Heading: PROPOSED TRAVELLING-KITCHENS]

The vans would have to have the Red Cross painted on them, and in *small* letters, somewhere inconspicuous, "Miss Macnaughtan's Travelling-Kitchens." This is only for identification. I thought we might begin with *three*, and get them sent out *at once*, and go on as they are required. I must have a capable person and a helper in charge of each, so that limits my number. The Germans have beautiful little kitchens at each station, but I can't be sure what money I can raise, so must go slow.

I want also two little trollies, just to hold a tin jug and some tin cups hung round, with one oil-lamp to keep the jug hot. The weather will be bitter soon, and only "special" cases have blankets.



Clemmie, if only we could see this thing through without too much red tape!... No permission need be given for the work of these kitchens, as we are under the Belgian Minister of War and act for Belgium.

I thought of coming over to London for a day or two, and I can still do so, only I know you will be able to do this thing better than anyone, and will think of things that no one else thinks of. I can get voluntary workers, but meat and vegetables are dreadfully dear, so I shan't be able to spend a great deal on the vans. However, any day they may be taken by the Germans, so the only thing that really matters is to get the wounded a mug of hot soup.

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Last night I was dressing wounds and bandaging at Dunkirk station till 3 a.m. The men are brought there in *heaps*, all helpless, all suffering. Sometimes there are fifteen hundred in one day. Last night seven hundred lay on straw in a huge railway-shed, with straw to cover them—bedded down like cattle, and all in pain. Still, it is better than the trenches and shrapnel overhead!

At the Field Hospital the wounds are ghastly, and we are losing so many patients! Mere boys of sixteen come in sometimes mortally wounded, and there are a good many cases of wounded women. You see, no one is safe; and, oh, my dear, have you ever seen a town that has been thoroughly shelled? At Furnes we have a good many shells dropping in, but no real bombardment yet. After Antwerp I don't seem to care about these visitors. We were under fire there for eighteen hours, and it was a bit of a strain as our hospital was in a line with the Arsenal, which they were trying to destroy, so we got more than our share of attention. The noise was horrible, and the shells came in at the rate of four a minute. There was something quite hellish about it.

Do you remember that great bit of writing in Job, when Wisdom speaks and says: "Destruction and Death say, it is not in me"?

The wantonness and sort of rage of it all appalled one. Our women behaved splendidly.

I'll come over to England if you think I had better, but I am sure you are the person I want.... If anything should prevent your helping, please wire to me: otherwise I shall know things are going forward.

Your loving,
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

The vans should be strong as they may have rough usage; also, to take them to their destination they may have to be hitched on to a motor-ambulance.

One or two strong trays in each kitchen would be useful. The little trollies would be for railway-station work. As we go on I hope to have one kitchen for each dressing-station as well.

SALLY.

* * * * *

8 November.—This afternoon I went down to the Hotel des Arcades, which is the general meeting ground for everyone. The drawing-room was full and so was the Place Jean Bart, on which it looks. Suddenly we saw people beginning to fly! Soldiers, old men, children in their Sunday clothes, all running to cover. I asked what was up, and heard that a Taube was at that moment flying over our hotel. These are the sort of



pleasant things one hears out here! Then Lady Decies came running in to say that two bombs had fallen and twenty people were wounded.

Once more we got bandages and lint and hurried off in a motor-car, but the civilian doctors were looking after everyone. The bomb by good luck had fallen in a little garden, and had done the least damage imaginable, but every window in the neighbourhood was smashed.

[Page Heading: NIGHT WORK AT RAILWAY SHEDS]

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At night we went to the railway-sheds and dressed wounds. I made them do the Germans; but it was too late for one of them—a handsome young fellow with both his feet deep blue with frost-bite, his leg broken, and a great wound in his thigh. He had not been touched for eight days. Another man had a great hole right through his arm and shoulder. The dressing was rough and ready. The surgeons clapped a great wad of lint into the hole and we bound it up. There is no hot water, no sterilising, no cyanide gauze even, but iodine saves many lives, and we have plenty of it. The German boy was dying when we left. His eyes above the straw began to look glazed and dim. Death, at least, is merciful.

We work so late at the railway-sheds that I lie in bed till lunch time. Lady Bagot and I go to the sheds in the evening and stay there till 1 a.m.

11 November. Boulogne.—I got a letter from Julia yesterday, telling me that Alan is wounded and in hospital at Boulogne, and asking me to go and see him.

I came here this morning and had to run about for a long time before I started getting a “laissez-passer” for the road, as spies are being shot almost at sight now. By good chance I got a motor-car which brought me all the way; trains are uncertain, and filled with troops, and one never knows when they will arrive.

[Page Heading: STORIES OF THE BRITISH FRONT]

I found poor old Alan at the Base Hospital, in terrible pain, poor boy, but not dangerously wounded. He has been through an awful time, and nearly all the officers of his regiment have been killed or wounded. For my part, in spite of his pain, I can thank God that he is out of the firing-line for a bit. The horror of the war has got right into him, and he has seen things which few boys of eighteen can have witnessed. Eight days in the trenches at Ypres under heavy fire day and night is a pretty severe test, and Alan has behaved splendidly. He told me the most awful tales of what he had seen, but I believe it did him good to get things off his chest, so I listened. The thing he found the most ghastly was the fact that when a trench has been taken or lost the wounded and dying and dead are left out in the open. He says that firing never ceases, and it is impossible to reach these men, who die of starvation within sight of their comrades.

“Sometimes,” Alan said, “we see them raise themselves on an arm for an instant, and they yell to us to come to them, but we can’t.”

His own wound was received when the Germans “got their range to an inch” and began shelling their trenches. A whole company next to Alan was wiped out, and he started to go back to tell his Colonel the trench could not be held. The communication trench by which he went was not quite finished, and he had to get out into the open and race across to where the unfinished trench began again. Poor child, running for his life! He was badly hit in the groin, but managed just to tumble into the next bit of the trench,



where he found two men who carried him, pouring with blood, to his Colonel. He was hastily bound up and carried four miles on crossed rifles to the hospital at Ypres, where his wound was properly dressed, and after an hour he was put on the train for Boulogne.



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Alan had one story of how he was told to wait at a certain spot with 130 men. “So I waited,” he said, “but the fire was awful.” His regiment had, it seems, gone round another way. “I got thirty of the men away,” Alan said, “the rest were killed.” It means something to be an officer and a gentleman.

Every day the list of casualties grows longer, and I wonder who will be left.

19 November. Furnes.—Early on Monday, the 16th, I left Boulogne in Lady Bagot’s car and came to Dunkirk, where I was laid up with a cold for two or three days. It was singularly uncomfortable, as no one ever answered my bell, *etc.*; but I had a bed, which is always such a comfort, and the room was heated, so I got my things dry. Very often I find the only way to do this or to get dry clothing is to take things to bed with one—it is rather chilly, but better than putting on wet things in the morning.

The usual number of unexpected people keep coming and going. At Boulogne I met Lady Eileen Elliot, Ian Malcolm, Lord Francis Scott, and various others—all very English and clean and well fed. It was quite different from Furnes, to which I returned on Wednesday. Most of us sleep on mattresses on the floor at Furnes, but even these were all occupied, so I hopped about getting in where I could. The cold weather “set in in earnest” as newspapers say, and when it does that in Furnes it seems to be particularly in earnest.

* * * * *

To Lady Clementine Waring.

HOTEL DES ARCADES,
DUNKERQUE,
18 November, 1914.

DEAREST CLEMMIE,

Forgive the delay in writing again. I was too sick about it all at first, then I was sent for to go to Boulogne to see my nephew, who is badly wounded. I can’t explain the present situation to you because it would only be censored, but I hope to write about it later.

I shall manage the soup-kitchens soon, I hope, but next week will decide that and many things. The objection to the *pattern* is that those vans would overturn going round corners when hitched on behind ambulances. Some wealthy people are giving a regular motor kitchen to run about to various “dressing”-stations—this will be most useful, but it doesn’t do away with the need of something to eat during those interminable waits at the *railway*-stations.

[Page Heading: CHANGES IN THE SITUATION]



To-morrow I begin my own little soup-kitchen at Furnes. I have a room but no van, and this is most unsatisfactory, as any day the room (so near the station) may be commandeered. A van would make me quite independent, but I must feel my way. The situation changes very often, as you will of course see, and when one is quite close to the Front one has to be always changing with it.

I want helpers and I want vans, but rules are becoming stricter than ever. Even Adeline, Duchess of Bedford, whose good work everyone knows, has waited for a permit for a week at Boulogne, and has now gone home. When all the useful women have been expelled there will follow the usual tale of soldiers' suffering and privations: when women are about they don't let them suffer.



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The only plan (if you know of any man who wants to come out) is to know how to drive a motor-car and then to offer it and his services to the Red Cross Society. I have set my heart on station soup-kitchens because I see the men put into horse-boxes on straw straight off the field, and there they lie without water or light or food while the train jolts on for hours. I wish I had you here to back me up! We could do anything together.

As ever, yours gratefully,
SALLY.

The motor kitchens cost L600 fitted, but the maker is giving the one I speak of for L300. Everyone has given so much to the war I don't feel sure I could collect this amount. I might try America, but it takes a long time.

CHAPTER III

AT FURNES RAILWAY-STATION

21 November.—I am up to my eyes in soup! I have started my soup-kitchen at the station, and it gives me a lot to do. Bad luck to it, my cold and cough are pretty bad!

It is odd to wake in the morning in a frozen room, with every pane of glass green and thick with frost, and one does not dare to think of Mary and morning tea! When I can summon enough moral courage to put a foot out of bed I jump into my clothes at once; half dressed, I go to a little tap of cold water to wash, and then, and for ever, I forgive entirely those sections of society who do not tub. We brush our own boots here, and put on all the clothes we possess, and then descend to a breakfast of Quaker oat porridge with bread and margarine. I wouldn't have it different, really, till our men are out of the trenches; but I am hoping most fervently that I shan't break down, as I am so "full with soup."

[Page Heading: WORK IN THE SOUP-KITCHEN]

Our kitchen at the railway-station is a little bit of a passage, which measures eight feet by eight feet. In it are two small stoves. One is a little round iron thing which burns, and the other is a sort of little "kitchener" which doesn't! With this equipment, and various huge "marmites," we make coffee and soup for hundreds of men every day. The first convoy gets into the station about 9.30 a.m., all the men frozen, the black troops nearly dead with cold. As soon as the train arrives I carry out one of my boiling "marmites" to the middle of the stone entrance and ladle out the soup, while a Belgian Sister takes round coffee and bread.

These Belgians (three of them) deserve much of the credit for the soup-kitchen, if any credit is going about, as they started with coffee before I came, and did wonders on nothing. Now that I have bought my pots and pans and stoves we are able to do soup,



and much more. The Sisters do the coffee on one side of eight feet by eight, while I and my vegetables and the stove which goes out are on the other. We can't ask people to help because there is no room in the kitchen; besides, alas! there are so many people who like raising a man's head and giving him soup, but who do not like cutting up vegetables.

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After the first convoy of wounded has been served, other wounded men come in from time to time, then about 4 o'clock there is another train-load. At ten p.m. the largest convoy arrives. The men seem too stiff to move, and many are carried in on soldiers' backs. The stretchers are laid on the floor, those who can "s'asseoir" sit on benches, and every man produces a "quart" or tin cup. One and all they come out of the darkness and never look about them, but rouse themselves to get fed, and stretch out poor grimy hands for bread and steaming drinks. There is very little light—only one oil-lamp, which hangs from the roof, and burns dimly. Under this we place the "marmites," and all that I can see is one brown or black or wounded hand stretched out into the dim ring of light under the lamp, with a little tin mug held out for soup. Wet and ragged, and covered with sticky mud, the wounded lie in the salle of the station, and, except under the lamp, it is all quite dark. There are dim forms and frosty breaths, and a door which bangs continually, and then the train loads up, the wounded depart, and a heavy smell and an empty pot are all that remain. We clean up the kitchen, and go home about 1 a.m. I do the night work alone.

24 November.—We are beginning to get into our stride, and the small kitchen turns out its gallons and buckets of liquid. Mrs. — has been helping me with my work. It is good to see anyone so beautiful in the tiny kitchen, and it is quaint to see anyone so absolutely ignorant of how a pot is washed or a vegetable peeled.

I have a little electric lamp, which is a great comfort to me, as I have to walk home alone at midnight. When I get up in the morning I have to remember all I shall want during the day, as the villa is a mile from the station, so I take my lantern out at 9.30 a.m.!

I saw a Belgian regiment march back to the trenches to-day. They had a poor little band and some foggy instruments, and a bugler flourished a trumpet. I stood by the roadside and cried till I couldn't see.

* * * * *

[Page Heading: A LETTER HOME]

To Miss Mary King.

FURNES, BELGIUM,
27 November.

DEAR MARY,

You will like to know that I have a soup-kitchen at the station here, and I am up to my neck in soup. I make it all day and a good bit of the night too, for the wounded are coming in all the time, and they are half frozen—especially the black troops. People are



being so kind about the work I am doing, and they are all saying what a comfort the soup is to the men. Sometimes I feed several hundreds in a day.

I am sure everyone will grieve to hear of the death of Lord Roberts, but I think he died just as he would wish to have died—amongst his old troops, who loved him, and in the service of the King. He was a fine soldier and a Christian gentleman, and you can't say better of a man than that.



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I feel as if I had been out here for years, and it seems quite odd to think that one used to wear evening dress and have a fire in one's room. I am promising myself, if all goes well, to get home about Christmas-time. I wish I could think that the war would be over by then, but it doesn't look very like it.

Remember me to Gwennie, and to all your people. Take care of your old self.

Yours truly,
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

* * * * *

1 December.—Mrs. Knocker and Miss Chisholm and Lady Dorothy went out to Pervyse a few days ago to make soup, *etc.*, for Belgians in the trenches. They live in the cellar of a house which has been blown inside out by guns, and take out buckets of soup to men on outpost duty. Not a glimpse of fire is allowed on the outposts. Fortunately the weather has been milder lately, but soaking wet. Our three ladies walk about the trenches at night, and I come home at 1 a.m. from the station. The men of our party meanwhile do some house-work. They sit over the fire a good deal, clear away the tea-things, and when we come home at night we find they have put hot-water bottles in our beds and trimmed some lamps. I feel like Alice in Wonderland or some other upside-down world. We live in much discomfort, which is a little unnecessary; but no one seems to want to undertake housekeeping.

I make soup all day, and there is not much else to write about. All along the Yser the Allies and the Germans confront each other, but things have been quieter lately. The piteous list of casualties is not so long as it has been. A wounded German was brought in to-day. Both his legs were broken and his feet frost-bitten. He had been for four days in water with nothing to eat, and his legs unset. He is doing well.

[Page Heading: PERVYSE]

On Sunday I drove out to Pervyse with a kind friend, Mr. Tapp. At the end of the long avenue by which one approaches the village, Pervyse church stands, like a sentinel with both eyes shot out. Nothing is left but a blind stare. Hardly any of the church remains, and the churchyard is as if some devil had stalked through it, tearing up crosses and kicking down graves. Even the dead are not left undisturbed in this awful war. The village (like many other villages) is just a mass of gaping ruins—roofs blown off, streets full of holes, not a window left unshattered, and the guns still booming.

* * * * *

To Mrs. Charles Percival.



FURNES, BELGIUM,
5 December.

DARLING TAB,

I have a chance of sending this to England to be posted, so I must send you a line to wish you many happy returns of the day. I wish we could have our yearly kiss. I will think of you a lot, my dear, on the 8th, and drink your health if I can raise the wherewithal. We are not famous for our comforts, and it would amaze you to see how very nasty food can be, and how very little one can get of it.



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I have an interesting job now, and it is my own, which is rather a mercy, as I never know which is most common, dirt or muddle. I can have things as clean as I like, and my soup is getting quite a name for itself. The first convoy of wounded generally comes into the station about 11 a.m. It may number anything. Then the men are put into the train, and there begins a weary wait for the poor fellows till more wounded arrive and the train is loaded up, and sometimes they are kept there all day. The stretcher cases are in a long corridor, and the sitting-up cases in ordinary third-class carriages. The sitters are worn, limping men, with bandaged heads, and hands bound up, who are yet capable of sitting up in a train.

The transport is well done, I think (*far* better than in South Africa), but more women are wanted to look after details. To give you one instance: all stretchers are made of different sizes, so that if a man arrives on an ambulance, the stretchers belonging to it cannot go into the train, and the poor wounded man has to be lifted and “transferred,” which causes him (in the case of broken legs or internal injuries especially) untold suffering. It also takes up much room, and gives endless trouble for the sake of an *inch and a half* of space, which is the usual difference in the size of the stretchers, but that prevents them slipping into the sockets on the train.

Another thing I have noticed is, that no man, even lying down in the train, ever gets his boots taken off. The men’s feet are always soaked through, as they have been standing up to their knees in water in the trenches; but, of course, slippers are unheard of. I do wonder if ladies could be persuaded to make any sort of list or felt or even flannel slippers? I saw quite a good pattern the other day, and will try to send you one, in case Eastbourne should rise to the occasion. Of course, there must be *hundreds* of pairs, and heaps would get lost. I do believe other centres would join, and the cost of material for slippers would be quite trifling. A priest goes in each corridor train, and there is always a stove where the boots could be dried. I believe slippers can be bought for about a shilling a pair. The men’s feet are *enormous*. Cases should be marked with a red cross, and sent per S.S. *Invicta*, Admiralty Pier, Dover.

[Page Heading: THE SHELLING OF LAMPERNESSE]

The fighting has had a sort of lull here for some time, but there are always horrible things happening. The other day at Lampernesse, 500 soldiers were sleeping on straw in a church. A spy informed the Germans, who were twelve miles off, but they got the range to an inch, and sent shells straight into the church, killing and wounding nearly everyone in it, and leaving men under the ruins. We had some terrible cases that day. The church was shelled at 6 a.m., and by 11 a.m. all the wounded were having soup and coffee at the station. I thought their faces were more full of horror than any I had seen.



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The parson belonging to our convoy is a particularly nice young fellow. I have had a bad cold lately, and every night he puts a hot-water bottle in my bed. When he can raise any food he lays a little supper for me, so that when I come in between 12 and 1 o'clock I can have something to eat, a lump of cheese, plum jam, and perhaps a piece of bully beef, always three pieces of ginger from a paper bag he has of them. Last night when I got back I found I couldn't open the door leading into a sort of garage through which we have to enter this house. I pushed as hard as I could, and then found I was pushing against horses, and that a whole squad of troop horses had been shoved in there for the night, so I had to make my entry under their noses and behind their heels. Pinned to the table inside the house was a note from the parson, "I can't get you any food, but I have put a bottle of port-wine in your room. Stick to it."

I had meant to go early to church to-day, but I was really too tired, so I am writing to you instead. Now I must be getting up, for "business must be attended to."

Well, good-bye, my dear. I am always too busy to write now, so would you mind sending this letter on to the family?

Your loving sister,
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

* * * * *

December.—Unexpected people continue to arrive at Furnes. *Mme. Curie* and her daughter are in charge of the X-ray apparatus at the hospital. *Sir Bartle Frere* is there as a guest. *Miss Vaughan*, of the *Nursing Times*, came in out of the dark one evening. To-day the King has been here. God bless him! he always does the right thing.

6 December.—My horizon is bounded by soup and the men who drink it. There is a stir outside the kitchen, and someone says, "Convoi." So then we begin to fill pots and take steaming "marmites" off the fire. The "sitting cases" come in first, hobbling, or carried on their comrades' backs—heads and feet bandaged or poor hands maimed. When they have been carried or have stiffly and slowly marched through the entrance to the train, the "brancard" cases are brought in and laid on the floor. They are hastily examined, and a doctor goes round reading the labels attached to them which describe their wounds. An English ambulance and a French one wait to take serious cases to their respective hospitals. The others are lifted on to train-stretchers and carried to the train.

[Page Heading: A QUESTION OF STRETCHERS]

Two doctors came out from England on inspection duty to-day. They asked if I had anything to report, and I made them come to the station to go into this matter of the different-sized stretchers. It is agony to the men to be shifted. Dr. Wilson has promised



to take up the question. The transport service is now much improved. The trains are heated and lighted, and priests travel with the lying-down cases.

8 December.—I have a little “charette” for my soup. It is painted red, and gives a lot of amusement to the wounded. The trains are very long, and my small carriage is useful for cups and basins, bread, soup, coffee, *etc.* Clemmie Waring designed and sent it to me.



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To-day I was giving out my soup on the train and three shells came in in quick succession. One came just over my head and lodged in a haystack on the other side of the platform. The wall of the store has an enormous hole in it, but the thickly packed hay prevented the shrapnel scattering. The station-master was hit, and his watch saved him, but it was crumpled up like a rag. Two men were wounded, and one of them died. A whole crowd of refugees came in from Coxide, which is being heavily shelled. There was not a scrap of food for them, so I made soup in great quantities, and distributed it to them in a crowded room whose atmosphere was thick. Ladling out the soup is great fun.

12 December.—The days are very short now, and darkness falls early. All the streets are dark, so are the houses, so is the station. Two candles are a rare treat, and oil is difficult to get.

Such a nice boy died to-night. We brought him to the hospital from the station, and learned that he had lain for eight days wounded and untended. Strangely enough he was naked, and had only a blanket over him on the stretcher. I do not know why he was still alive. Everything was done for him that could be done, but as I passed through one of the wards this evening the nurses were doing their last kindly duty to him. Poor fellow! He was one of those who had “given even their names.” No one knew who he was. He had a woman’s portrait tattooed on his breast.

19 December.—Not much to record this week. The days have become more stereotyped, and their variety consists in the number of wounded who come in. One day we had 280 extra men to feed—a batch of soldiers returning hungry to the trenches, and some refugees. So far we have never refused anyone a cup of soup; or coffee and bread.

I haven’t been fit lately, and get fearful bad headaches. I go to the station at 10 a.m. every morning, and work till 1 o’clock. Then to the hospital for lunch. I like the staff there very much. The surgeons are not only skilful, but they are men of education. We all get on well together, in spite of that curious form of temper which war always seems to bring. No one is affable here, except those who have just come out from home, and it is quite common to hear a request made and refused, or granted with, “Please do not ask again.” Newcomers are looked upon as aliens, and there is a queer sort of jealousy about all the work.

[Page Heading: WAR WORKERS’ DIFFICULTIES]

Oddly enough, few persons seem to show at their best at a time when the best should be apparent. No doubt, it is a form of nerves, which is quite pardonable. Nurses and surgeons do not suffer from it. They are accustomed to work and to seeing suffering, but amateur workers are a bit headlong at times. I think the expectation of excitement (which is often frustrated) has a good deal to do with it. Those who “come out for thrills”

often have a long waiting time, and energies unexpended in one direction often show themselves unexpectedly and a little unpleasantly in another.



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In my own department I always let Zeal spend itself unchecked, and I find that people who have claimed work or a job ferociously are the first to complain of over-work if left to themselves. Afterwards, if there is any good in them, they settle down into their stride. They are only like young horses, pulling too hard at first and sweating off their strength—jibbing one moment and shying the next—when it comes to “’ammer, ’ammer, ’ammer on the ’ard ’igh road,” one finds who is going to stick it and who is not.

There has been some heavy firing round about Nieuport and south of the Yser lately, and an unusual number of wounded have been coming in, many of them “gravement blesses.”

One evening a young French officer came to the kitchen for soup. It was on Wednesday, December 16th, the day the Allies assumed the offensive, and all night cases were being brought in. He was quite a boy, and utterly shaken by what he had been through. He could only repeat, “It was horrible, horrible!” These are the men who tell brave tales when they get home, but we see them dirty and worn, when they have left the trenches only an hour before, and have the horror of battle in their eyes.

There are scores of “pieds geles” at present, and I now have bags of socks for these. So many men come in with bare feet, and I hope in time to get carpet slippers and socks for them all. One night no one came to help, and I had a great business getting down a long train, so Mrs. Logette has promised to come every evening. The kitchen is much nicer now, as we are in a larger passage, and we have three stoves, lamps, *etc.* Many things are being “straightened out” besides, my poor little corner and war seems better understood. There is hardly a thing which is not thought of and done for the sick and wounded, and I should say a grievance was impossible.

I still lodge at the Villa Joos, and am beginning to enjoy a study of middle-class provincial life. The ladies do all the house-work. We have breakfast (a bite) in the kitchen at 8.30 a.m., then I go to make soup, and when I come back after lunch for a rest, “the family” are dressed and sitting round a stove, and this they continue to do till a meal has to be prepared. There is one lamp and one table, and one stove, and unless papa plays the pianola there is nothing to do but talk. No one reads, and only one woman does a little embroidery, while the small girl of the party cuts out scraps from a fashion paper.

The poor convoy! it is becoming very squabbly and tiresome, and there is a good deal of “talking over,” which is one of the weakest sides of “communal life.” It is petty and ridiculous to quarrel when Death is so near, and things are so big and often so tragic. Yet human nature has strict limitations. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald came out from the committee to see what all the complaints were about. So there were strange interviews, in store-rooms, *etc.* (no one has a place to call their own!), and everyone “explained” and “gave evidence” and tried to “put matters straight.”



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It rains every day. This may be a “providence,” as the floods are keeping the Germans away. The sound of constant rain on the window-panes is a little melancholy. Let us pray that in singleness and cheerfulness of heart we may do our little bit of work.

[Page Heading: EXPEDITION TO DUNKIRK]

23 December.—Yesterday I motored into Dunkirk, and did a lot of shopping. By accident our motor-car went back to Furnes without me, and there was not a bed to be had in Dunkirk! After many vicissitudes I met Captain Whiting, who gave up his room in his own house to me, and slept at the club. I was in clover for once, and nearly wept when I found my boots brushed and hot water at my door. It was so like home again.

I was leaving the station to-day when shelling began again. One shell dropped not far behind the bridge, which I had just crossed, and wrecked a house. Another fell into a boat on the canal and wounded the occupants badly. I went to tell the Belgian Sisters not to go down to the station, and I lunched at their house, and then went home till the evening work began. People are always telling one that danger is now over—a hidden gun has been discovered and captured, and there will be no more shelling. *Quel blague!* The shelling goes on just the same whether hidden guns are captured or not.

I can't say at present when I shall get home, because no one ever knows what is going to happen. I don't quite know who would take my place at the soup-kitchen if I were to leave.

25 December.—My Christmas Day began at midnight, when I walked home through the moonlit empty streets of Furnes. At 2 a.m. the guns began to roar, and roared all night. They say the Allies are making an attack.

I got up early and went to church in the untidy school-room at the hospital, which is called the nurses' sitting-room. Mr. Streatfield had arranged a little altar, which was quite nice, and had set some chairs in an orderly row. As much as in him lay—from the altar linen to the white artificial flowers in the vases—all was as decent as could be and there were candles and a cross. We were quite a small congregation, but another service had been held earlier, and the wounded heard Mass in their ward at 6 a.m. The priests put up an altar there, and I believe the singing was excellent. Inside we prayed for peace, and outside the guns went on firing. Prince Alexander of Teck came to our service—a big soldierly figure in the bare room.

[Page Heading: CHRISTMAS IN BELGIUM]

After breakfast I went to the soup-kitchen at the station, as usual, then home—*i.e.*, to the hospital to lunch. At 3.15 came a sort of evensong with hymns, and then we went to the civil hospital, where there was a Christmas-tree for all the Belgian refugee children. Anything more touching I never saw, and to be with them made one blind with tears.



One tiny mite, with her head in bandages, and a little black shawl on, was introduced to me as “une blessee, madame.” Another little boy in the hospital is always spoken of gravely as “the civilian.”



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Every man, woman, and child got a treat or a present or a good dinner. The wounded had turkey, and all they could eat, and the children got toys and sweets off the tree. I suppose these children are not much accustomed to presents, for their delight was almost too much for them. I have never seen such excitement! Poor mites! without homes or money, and with their relations often lost—yet little boys were gibbering over their toys, and little girls clung to big parcels, and squeaked dolls or blew trumpets. The bigger children had rather good voices, and all sang our National Anthem in English. “God save our nobbler King”—the accent was quaint, but the children sang lustily.

We had finished, and were waiting for our own Christmas dinner when shells began to fly. One came whizzing past Mr. Streatfield’s store-room as I stood there with him. The next minute a little child in floods of tears came in, grasping her mother’s bag, to say “Maman” had had her arm blown off. The child herself was covered with dust and dirt, and in the streets people were sheltering in doorways, and taking little runs for safety as soon as a shell had finished bursting. The bombardment lasted about an hour, and we all waited in the kitchen and listened to it. At such times, when everyone is rather strung up, someone always and continually lets things fall. A nun clattered down a pail, and Maurice the cook seemed to fling saucepan-lids on the floor.

About 8.15 the bombardment ceased, and we went in to a cheery dinner—soup, turkey, and plum-pudding, with crackers and speeches. I believe no one would have guessed we had been a bit “on the stretch.”

At 9.30 I went to the station. It was very melancholy. No one was there but myself. The fires were out, or smoking badly. Everyone had been scared to death by the shells, and talked of nothing else, whereas shells should be forgotten directly. I got things in order as soon as I could and the wounded in the train got their hot soup and coffee as usual, which was a satisfaction. Then I came home alone at midnight—keeping as near the houses as I could because of possible shells—and so to bed, very cold, and rather too inclined to think about home.

26 December.—Went to the station. Oddly enough, very few wounded were there, so I came away, and had my first day at home. I got a little oil-stove put in my room, wrote letters, tidied up, and thoroughly enjoyed myself.

A Taube came over and hovered above Furnes, and dropped bombs. I was at the Villa, and the family of Joos and I stood and watched it, and a nasty dangerous moth it looked away up in the sky. Presently it came over our house, so we went down to the kitchen. A few shots were fired, but the Taube was far too high up to be hit. Max, the Joos’ cousin, went out and “tirait,” to the admiration of the women-kind, and then, of course, “Papa” had to have a try. The two men, with their little gun and their talk and gesticulations, lent a queer touch of comic opera to the scene. The garden was so small, the men in their little hats were so suggestive of the “broken English” scene on the stage, that one could only stand and laugh.



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[Page Heading: A BELGIAN DINNER-PARTY]

The Joos family are quite a study, and so kind. On Christmas Eve I dined with them, and they gave me the best of all they had. There was a pheasant, which someone had given the doctor (I fancy he is a very small practitioner amongst the poor people); surely, never did a bird give more pleasure. I had known of its arrival days before by seeing Fernande, the little girl, decorated with feathers from its tail. Then the good papa must be decorated also, and these small jokes delighted the whole family to the point of ecstasy.

On Christmas Eve Monsieur Max conceived the splendid joke, carefully arranged, of presenting Madame Joos—who is young and pretty—and the doctor with two parcels, which on being opened contained the child's umbrella and a toy gun. There wasn't even a comic address on the parcels; but Yrma, the servant, carefully trained for the part, brought them in in fits of delight, and all the family laughed with joy till the tears ran down their cheeks. As they wiped their eyes, they admitted they were sick with laughter. After supper we had the pianola, played by papa; and I must say that, when one can get nothing else, this instrument gives a great deal of pleasure. One gets a sort of ache for music which is just as bad as being hungry.

27 December.—Bad, bad weather again. It has rained almost continuously for five weeks. Yesterday it snowed. Always the wind blows, and *something* lashes itself against the panes. One can't leave the windows open, as the rooms get flooded. It is amazingly cold o' nights, I can't sleep for the cold.

We have some funny incidents at the station sometimes. A particularly amusing one occurred the other day, when three ladies in knickerbockers and khaki and badges appeared at our soup-kitchen door and announced they were "on duty" there till 6 o'clock. I was not there, but the scene that followed has been described to me, and has often made me laugh.

It seems the ladies never got further than the door! Some people might have been firm in the "Too sorry! Come-some-other-day-when-we-are-not-so-busy" sort of way. Not so Miss ——. In more primitive times she would probably have gone for the visitors with a broom, but her tongue is just as rough as the hardest besom, and from their dress ("skipping over soldiers' faces with breeches on, indeed!") to their corps there was very little left of them.

[Page Heading: OUR TROUBLE WITH SPIES]

It wasn't really from the dog-in-the-manger spirit that the little woman acted. The fact is that Belgians and French run the station together, and they are all agreed on one thing, which is, that no one but an authorised and registered person is to come within its



doors. Heaven knows the trouble there has been with spies, and this rule is absolutely necessary.

Two Red Cross khaki-clad men have been driving everywhere in Furnes, and have been found to be Germans. Had we permitted itinerant workers, the authorities gave notice that the kitchen would have to close.



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In the evening, when I went to the station, another knickerbockered lady sat there! I told her our difficulties, but allowed her to do a little work rather than hurt her feelings. The following day Miss —— engaged in deadly conflict with the lady who had sent our unwelcome visitors. Over the scene we will draw a veil, but we never saw the knickerbockered ladies again!

31 December, 1914.—The last day of this bad old year. I feel quite thankful for the summer I had at the Grange. It has been something to look back upon all the time I have been here; the pergolas of pink roses, the sleepy fields, the dear people who used to come and stay with me, and all the fun and pleasure of it, help one a good deal now.

Yesterday was a fine day in the middle of weeks of rain. When I came down to breakfast in the Joos' little kitchen I remarked, of course, on the beauty of the weather. "What a day for Taubes!" said Monsieur Max, looking up at the clear blue sky. Before I had left home there was a shell in a street close by, and one heard that already these horrible birds of prey had been at work, and had thrown two bombs, which destroyed two houses in the Rue des Trefles. The pigeons that circle round the old buildings in Furnes always seem to see the Taubes first, as if they knew by sight their hateful brothers. They flutter disturbed from roof and turret, and then, with a flash of white wings, they fly far away. I often wish I had wings when I see them.

I went to the station, and then to the hospital for slippers for some wounded men. Five aeroplanes were overhead—Allies' and German—and there was a good deal of firing. I was struck by the fact that the night before I had seen *exactly* this scene in a dream. Second sight always gives me much to think about. The inevitableness of things seems much accentuated by it. In my dream I stood by the other people in the yard looking at the war in the air, and watching the circling aeroplanes and the bursts of smoke.

At the station there was a nasty feeling that something was going to happen. The Taubes wheeled about and hovered in the blue. I went to the hospital for lunch, and afterwards I asked Mr. Bevan to come to the station to look at some wounded whose dressings had not been touched for too long. He said he would come in half an hour, so I said I wouldn't wait, as he knew exactly where to find the men, and I came back to the Villa for my rest. As I walked home I heard that the station had been shelled, and I met one of the Belgian Sisters and told her not to go on duty till after dark, but I had no idea till evening came of what had happened. Ten shells burst in or round the station. Men, women, and children were killed. They tell me that limbs were flying, and a French chauffeur, who came on here, picked up a man's leg in the street. Mr. Bevan sent up word to say none of us was to go to the station for the present.



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At Dunkirk seven Taubes flew overhead and dropped bombs, killing twenty-eight people. At Pervyse shells are coming in every day. I can't help wondering when we shall clear out of this. If the bridges are destroyed it will be difficult to get away. The weather has turned very wet again this evening. We have only had two or three fine days in as many months. The wind howls day and night, and the place is so well known for it that "vent de Furnes" is a byword. No doubt the floods protect us, so one mustn't grumble at a sore throat.

[Page Heading: SHELLS AT FURNES]

1 January.—The station was shelled again to-day. Three houses were destroyed, and there was one person killed and a good many more were wounded. A rumour got about that the Germans had promised 500 shells in Furnes on New Year's Day.

In the evening I went down to the station, and I was evidently not expected. Not a thing was ready for the wounded. The man in charge had let all three fires out, and he and about seven soldiers (mostly drunk) were making merry in the kitchen. None of them would budge, and I was glad I had young Mr. Findlay with me, as he was in uniform, and helped to get things straight. But these French seem to have very little discipline, and even when the military doctors came in the men did nothing but argue with them. It was amazing to hear them. One night a soldier, who is always drunk, was lying on a brancard in the doctor's own room, and no one seemed to mind.

3 January, Sunday.—I have had my usual rest and hot bath. I find I never want a holiday if I may have my Sundays. I spent a lazy afternoon in Miss Scott's room, she being ill, then went to Mr. Streatfield's service, dinner, and the station. A new officer was on duty there, and was introduced to the kitchen. He said, "Les anglais, of course. No one else ever does anything for anybody."

I believe this is very nearly the case. God knows, we are full of faults, but the superiority of the British race to any other that I know is a matter of deep conviction with me, and it is founded, I think, on wide experience.

6 January.—I went to Adinkerke two days ago to establish a soup-kitchen there, as they say that Furnes station is too dangerous. We have been given a nice little waiting-room and a stove. We heard to-day that the station-master at Furnes has been signalling to the enemy, so that is why we have been shelled so punctually. His daughter is engaged to a German. Two of our hospital people noticed that before each bombardment a blue light appeared to flash on the sky. They reported the matter, with the result that the signals were discovered.

[Page Heading: THE SHELLING GETS WORSE]

There has been a lot of shelling again to-day, and several houses are destroyed. A child of two years is in our hospital with one leg blown off and the other broken. One only hears people spoken of as, "the man with the abdominal trouble," or "the one shot through the lungs."



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Children know the different aeroplanes by sight, and one little girl, when I ask her for news, gives me a list of the “obus” that have arrived, and which have “s’eclate,” and which have not. One can see that she despises those which “ne s’eclatent pas.” One says “Bon soir, pas des obus,” as in English one says, “Good-night, sleep well.”

10 January.—Prince Alexander of Teck dined at the hospital last night, and we had a great spread. Madame Sindici did wonders, and there were hired plates and finger-bowls, and food galore! We felt real swells. An old General—the head of the Army Medical Corps—gave me the most grateful thanks for serving the soldiers. It was gracefully and delightfully done.

I am going home for a week’s holiday.

14 January.—I went home *via* Calais. Mr. Bevan and Mr. Morgan took me there. It was a fine day and I felt happy for once, that is, for once out here.

Some people enjoy this war. I think it is far the worst time, except one, I ever spent. Perhaps I have seen more suffering than most people. A doctor sees a hospital, and a nurse sees a ward of sick and wounded, but I see them by the hundred passing before me in an endless train all day. I can make none of them really better. I feed them, and they pass on.

One reviews one’s life a little as one departs. Always I shall remember Furnes as a place of wet streets and long dark evenings, with gales blowing, and as a place where I have been always alone. I have not once all this time exchanged a thought with anyone. I have lived in a very damp attic, and talked French to some kind middle-class people, and I have walked a mile for every meal I have had. So I shall always think of Furnes as a wet, dark place, and of myself with a lantern trudging about its mean streets.

CHAPTER IV

WORKING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

I have not written my diary for some weeks. I went home to England and stayed at Rayleigh House. On my way home I met Mr. F. Ware, who told me submarines were about. As I had but just left a much-shelled town, I think he might have held his peace. The usual warm welcome at Rayleigh House, with Mary there to meet me, and Emily Strutt.

I wasn’t very tired when I first arrived, but fatigue came out on me like a rash afterwards. I got more tired every day, and ended by having a sort of breakdown. This rather spoilt my holiday, but it was very nice seeing people again. It was difficult, I found, to accommodate myself to small things, and one was amazed to find people still



driving serenely in closed broughams. It was like going back to live on earth again after being in rather a horrible other world. I went to my own house and enjoyed the very smell of the place. My little library and an hour or two spent there made my happiest time. Different people asked me to things, but I wasn't up to going out, and the weather was amazingly bad.



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I was to have gone back to work on the Thursday week after I arrived home, but I got a telegram from Madame Sindici saying Furnes was being shelled, and the hospital, *etc.*, was to be evacuated. Dr. Perrin, who was to have taken me back, had to start immediately without me. It was difficult to get news, and hearing nothing I went over on Saturday, January 23rd, as I had left Mrs. Clitheroe in charge of my soup-kitchen, and thought I had better do the burning deck act and get back to it.

Mr. Bevan and Mr. Morgan met me at Calais, and told me to wait at Dunkirk, as everyone was quitting Furnes. One of our poor nurses was killed, and the Joos' little house was much damaged. I stopped at Mrs. Clitheroe's flat, very glad to be ill in peace after my seedy condition in London and a bad crossing. Rested quietly all Sunday in the flat by myself. It is an empty, bare little place, with neither carpets nor curtains, but there is something home-like about it, the result, I think, of having an open fire in one room.

On Monday, the 25th, I went back to work at Adinkerke station, to which place our soup-kitchen has been moved. I got a warm welcome from the Belgian Sisters. It is very difficult doing the station work from Dunkirk, as it is 16 kilometres from Adinkerke; but the place itself is nice, and I just have to trust to lifts. I fill my pockets with cigarettes and go to the "sortie de la ville," and just wait for something to pass—and some queer, bumpy rides I get. Still, the soldiers who drive me are delightful, and the cigarettes are always taken as good pay.

One day I went and spent the night at Hoogstadt, where the hospital now is, and that I much enjoyed. Dr. Perrin gave up his little room to me, and the nurses and staff were all so full of welcome and pleasant speeches.

On Monday, February 8th, I went out to La Panne to start living in the hotel there; but I was really dreadfully seedy, and suffered so much that I had to return to the flat at Dunkirk again to be nursed. My day at La Panne was therefore very sad, as I nearly perished with cold, and felt so ill. Not a soul came near me, and I wished I could be a Belgian refugee, when I might have had a little attention from somebody.

On Tuesday, February 9th, a Belgian officer came into Adinkerke station, claimed our kitchen as a bureau, and turned us out on to the platform. I am trying to get General Millis to interfere; but, indeed, the rudeness of this man's act makes one furious.

[Page Heading: ILLNESS AT DUNKIRK]

14 February.—I have been laid up for some days at the flat at Dunkirk. It is amazing to realise that this place should be one's present idea of comfort. It has no carpets, no curtains, not a blind that will pull up or down, and rather dirty floors, yet it is so much more comfortable than anything I have had yet that I am too thankful to be here. There

is a gas-ring in the kitchen, on which it is possible to cook our food, and there are shops where things can be got.



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Mr. Strickland and I are both laid up here, and Miss Logan nurses us devotedly. Our joy is having a sitting-room with a fire in it. Was there ever anything half so good as that fire, or half so homely, half so warm or so much one's own? I lie on three chairs in front of it, and headache and cold and throat are almost forgotten. The wind howls, the sea roars, and aeroplanes fly overhead, but at least we have our fire and are at home.

17 February.—Another cold, wet day. I am alone in the flat with a “femme de menage” to look after me. A doctor comes to see me sometimes. Miss Logan and Mr. Strickland left this morning. There was a tempest of rain, and I couldn't think of being moved. They were sweet and kind, and felt bad about leaving me; but I am just loving being left alone with some books and my fire.

I have been lying in bed correcting proofs. Oh, the joy of being at one's own work again! Just to see print is a pleasure. I believe I have forgotten all I ever knew before the war began. A magazine article comes to me like a language I have almost forgotten.

18 February.—This is the day that German “piracy” is supposed to begin. We heard a great explosion early this morning, but it was only a mine that had been found on the shore being blown up. The sailors' aeroplane corps is opposite us, and we see Commander Samson and others flying off in the morning and whirling back at night, and then we hear there has been a raid somewhere. When a Taube comes over here the sailors fire at it with a gun just opposite us, and then tell us they only do it to give us flower-vases—*i.e.*, empty shell-cases!

[Page Heading: SOME STORIES OF THE WAR]

Mr. Holland came here to-day, and told me some humorous sides of his experiences with ambulances. One man from the Church Army marched in, and said: “I am a Christian and you are not. I come here for petrol, and I ask it, not for the Red Cross, but in the name of Christ.” Another man came dashing in, and said: “I want to go to Poperinghe. I was once there before, and the mud was beastly. Send someone with me.”

My own latest experience was with an American woman of awful vulgarity. I asked her if she was busy, like everyone else in this place, and she said:

“No. I was suffering from a nervous breakdown, so I came out here. What is your *war* is my *peace*, and I now sleep like a baby.”

I want adjectives! How is one to describe the people who come for one brief visit to the station or hospital with an intense conviction that they and they only feel the suffering or even notice the wants of the men. Some are good workers. Others I call “This-poor-fellow-has-had-none.” Nurses may have been up all night, doctors may be worked off

their feet, seven hundred men may have passed through the station, all wounded and all fed, but when our visitors arrive they discover that "This poor fellow has had none," and firmly, and with a high sense of duty and of their own efficiency, they make the thing known.



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No one else has heard a man shouting for water; no one else knows that a man wants soup. The man may have appendicitis, or colitis, or pancreatitis, or he may have been shot through the lungs or the abdomen. It doesn't matter. The casual visitor knows he has been neglected, and she says so, and quite indiscriminately she fills everyone up with soup. Only she is tender-hearted. Only she could never really be hardened by being a nurse. She seizes a little cup, stoops over a man gracefully, and raises his head. Then she wants things passed to her, and someone must help her, and someone must listen to what she has to say. She feeds one man in half an hour, and goes away horrified at the way things are done. Fortunately these people never stay for long.

Then there is another. She can't understand why our ships should be blown up or why trenches should be taken. In her own mind she proves herself of good sound intelligence and a member of the Empire who won't be bamboozled, when she says firmly and with heat, "Why don't we *do* something?" She would like to scold a few Generals and Admirals, and she says she believes the Germans are much cleverer than ourselves. This last taunt she hopes will make people "*do* something." It stings, she thinks.

I could write a good deal about this "solitary winter," but I have not had time either to write or to read. I think something inside me has stood still or died during this war.

21 February, Sunday.—The Munro corps has swooped down in its usual hurry to distribute letters, and to say that someone is waiting down below and they can't stop. They eat a hasty sardine, drink a cup of coffee, and are off!

To-day I have made this flat tidy at last, and have had it cleaned and scrubbed. I have thrown away old papers and empty boxes, and can sit down and sniff contentedly. No convoy-ite sees the difference!

[Page Heading: THE COMMUNAL LIFE]

I think I have learnt every phase of muddle and makeshift this winter, but chiefly have I learnt the value of the Biblical recommendation to put candles on candlesticks. In the "convo Munro" I find them in bottles, on the lids of mustard-tins, in metal cups, or in the necks of bedroom carafes. Never is the wax removed. Where it drips there it remains. Where matches fall there they lie. The stumps of cigarettes grace even the insides of flower-pots, knives are wiped on bread, and overcoats of enormous weight (khaki in colour, with a red cross on the arm) are hung on inefficient loose nails, and fall down. Towels are always scarce; but then, they serve as dinner-napkins, pocket-handkerchiefs, and even as pillow-cases, so no wonder we are a little short of them. There is no necessity for muddle. There never is any necessity for it.

The communal life is a mistake. I wonder if Christ got bored with it.



On Sundays I always want to rest, and something always makes me write. The attack comes on quite early. It is irresistible. At last I am a little happy after these dreary months, and it is only because I can think a little, and because the days are not quite so dark. I think the nights have been longer here than I ever knew them. No doubt it is the bad weather and the small amount of light indoors that make the days seem so short.



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I am going back to-morrow to the station, with its train-loads of wounded men. I *want* to go, and to give them soup and comforts and cigarettes, but just ten days' illness and idleness have "balm'd my soul."

22 February.—Waited all day for a car to come and fetch me away. It was dull work as I could never leave the flat, and all my things were packed up, and there was no coal.

23 February.—Waited again all day. I got very tired of standing by the window looking out on a strip of beach at the bottom of the street, and on the people passing to and fro. Then I went down to the dock to try and get a car there, but the new police regulations made it impossible to cross the bridge. I went to the airmen opposite. No luck.

There is a peculiar brutality which seems to possess everyone out here during the war. I find it nearly everywhere, and it entails a good deal of unnecessary suffering. Always I am reminded of birds on a small ledge pushing each other into the sea. The big bird that pushes another one over goes to sleep comfortably.

I remember one evening at Dunkirk when we couldn't get rooms or food because the landlady of the hotel had lost all her servants. The staff at the — gave me a meal, but there was a queer want of courtesy about it. I said that anything would do for my supper, and I went to help get it myself. I spied a roll of cold veal on a shelf, and said helpfully that that would do splendidly, but the answer was: "Yes, but I believe that is for our next meal." However, in the end I got a scrap, consisting mostly of green stuffing.

"But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room"—ah, my dear Lord, in this world one may certainly take the lowest place, and keep it. It is only the great men who say, "Friend, come up higher."

"You can't have it," is on everyone's lips, and a general sense of bustle goes with the brutality. "You can't come here," "We won't have her," are quite common phrases. God help us, how nasty we all are!

I find one can score pretty heavily nowadays by being a "psychologist." All the most disagreeable people I know are psychologists, notably —, who breaks his promises and throws all his friends to the wolves, but who can still explain everything in his sapient way by saying he is a psychologist.

One thing I hope—that no one will ever call me "highly strung." I wish good old-fashioned bad temper was still the word for highly strung and nervy people.

... I am longing for beautiful things, music, flowers, fine thoughts....

[Page Heading: LA PANNE]



La Panne. 25 February.—At last I have succeeded in getting away from Dunkirk! The Duchess of Sutherland brought me here in her car. Last night I dined with Mrs. Clitheroe. She was less bustled than usual, and I enjoyed a chat with her as we walked home through the cold white mist which enshrouded La Panne.



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This long war has settled down to a long wait. Little goes on except desultory shelling, with its occasional quite useless victims. At the station we have mostly “malades” and “eclopes”; in the trenches the soldiers stand in the bitter cold, and occasionally are moved out by shells falling by chance amongst them. The men who are capable of big things wait and do nothing.

If it was not for the wounded how would one stand the life here? A man looks up patiently, dumbly, out of brown eyes, and one is able to go on again.

La Panne. 27 February.—I have been staying for three nights at the Kursaal Hotel, but my room was wanted and I had to turn out, so I packed my things and came down to the Villa les Chrysanthemes, and shared Mrs. Clitheroe’s room for a night. In the morning all our party packed up and left to go to Furnes, and I took on these rooms. I may be turned out any minute for “le militaire,” but meanwhile I am very comfortable.

The heroic element (a real thing among us) takes queer forms sometimes. “No sheets, of course,” is what one hears on every side, and to eat a meal standing and with dirty hands is to “play the game.” Maxine Elliott said, “The nervous exhaustion attendant upon discomfort hinders work,” and she “does herself” very well, as also do all the men of the regular forces. But volunteer corps—especially women—are heroically bent on being uncomfortable. In a way they like it, and they eat strange meals in large quantities, and feel that this is war.

Lord Leigh took me into Dunkirk in his car to-day, and I managed to get lots of vegetables for the soup-kitchen, and several other things I wanted. A lift is everything at this time, when one can “command” nothing. If one might for once feel that by paying a fare, however high, one could ensure having something—a railway journey, a motor-car, or even a bed! My work isn’t so heavy at the kitchen now, and the hours are not so long, so I hope to do some work of a literary nature.

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[Page Heading: LA PANNE]

To Miss Macnaughtan’s Sisters.

VILLA LES CHRYSANTHEMES
LA PANNE, BELGIUM,
Sunday, 28 February.

MY DEAR FAMILY,

It is so long since I wrote a decently long letter that I think I must write to you all, to thank you for yours, and to give you what news there is of myself.



Of war news there is none. The long war is now a long wait, and the huge expense still goes on, while we lock horns with our foes and just sway backwards and forwards a little, and this, as you know, we have done for weeks past. Every day at the station there is a little stream of men with heads or limbs bandaged, and our work goes on as before, although it is not on quite the same lines now. I used to make every drop of the soup myself, and give it out all down the train. Now we have a receiving-room for the wounded, where they stay all day, and we feed them four times, and then they are sent away. The whole thing is more military than it used to be, the result, I think, of officers not having much to do, and with a passion for writing out rules and regulations with a nice broad pen. Two orderlies help in the kitchen, the soup is "inspected," and what used to be "la cuisine de la dame ecossaise" is not so much a charitable institution as it was.



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One sees a good deal of that sort of thing during this war. Women have been seeing what is wanted, and have done the work themselves at really enormous difficulty, and in the face of opposition, and when it is a going concern it is taken over and, in many cases, the women are turned out. This was the case at Dunkirk station, which was known everywhere as “the shambles.” I myself tried to get the wounded attended to, and I went there with a naval doctor, who told me that he couldn’t uncover a single wound because of the awful atmosphere (it was quite common to see 15,000 men lying on straw). One woman took this matter in hand, purged the place, got mattresses, clean straw, stoves, *etc.*, and when all was in order the voice of authority turned her out.

This long waiting is being much more trying for people than actual fighting. In every corps the old heroic outlook is a little bit fogged by petty things. One sees the result of it in some wrangling and jealousy, but this will soon be forgotten when fighting with all its realities begins again.

I think Britain on the subject of “piracy” is about as fine as anything in her history. Her determination to ignore ultimatums and threats is really quite funny, and English people still put out in boats as they have always done, and are quite undismayed. Our own people here continue to travel by sea, as if submarines were rather a joke, and when going over to England on some small and useless little job they say apologetically, “Of course, I wouldn’t go if I hadn’t got to.” The fact is, if there is any danger about they have to be in it.

Some of our own corps have gone back to Furnes—I believe because it is being shelled. The rest of us are at La Panne, a cold seaside place amongst the dunes. In summer-time I fancy it is fashionable, but now it contains nothing but soldiers. They are quartered everywhere, and one never knows how long one will be able to keep a room. The station is at Adinkerke, where I have my kitchen. It is about two miles from La Panne, and it also is crammed with soldiers. There seems to be no attempt at sanitation anywhere.

I wish I had more interesting news to tell you, but I am at my station all day, and if there is anything to hear (which I doubt) I do not hear it.

There is a barge on the canal at Adinkerke which is our only excitement. It is the property of Maxine Elliott, Lady Drogheda, and Miss Close, and to go to tea with them is everyone’s ambition. The barge is crammed with things for Belgian refugees, and Maxine told me that the cargo represents “nearer L10,000 than L5,000.” It is piled with flour in sacks, clothing, medical comforts, *etc.* The work is good.

I am sending home some long pins like nails. They are called “Silent Death,” and are dropped from German aeroplanes. Boys pick them up and give them to us in exchange for cigarettes.

[Page Heading: MRS. PERCIVAL'S SLIPPERS]



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I want to tell Tabby how immensely pleased everyone is with her slippers. The men who have stood long in the trenches are in agonies of frost-bite and rheumatism, and now that I can give them these slippers when they arrive at the station, they are able to take off their wet boots caked with mud.

If J. would send me another little packet of groceries I should love it. Just what can come by post. That Bengers' Food of hers nearly saved my life when I was ill at Dunkirk. What I should like better than anything is a few good magazines and books. I get *Punch* and the *Spectator*, but I want the *English Review* and the *National*, and perhaps a *Hibbert*. I enclose ten shillings for these. What is being read? Stephen Coleridge seems to have brought out an interesting collection, but I can't remember its name. I wonder if any notice will be taken of "They who Question." The reviews speak well of the Canadian book.

Love to you all, and tell Alan how much I think of him. Bless you, my dears. Write often.

Yours as ever,
SARAH.

* * * * *

1 March.—Woe betide the person who owns anything out here: he is instantly deprived of it. "Pinching" is proverbial, and people have taken to carrying as many of their possessions as possible on their person, with the result that they are the strangest shapes and sizes. Still, one hopes the goods are valuable until one discovers that they generally consist of the following items: a watch that doesn't go, a fountain-pen that is never filled, an electric torch that won't light, a much-used hanky, an empty iodine bottle, and a scarf.

5 March.—I went as usual to-day to the muddy station and distributed soup, which I no longer make now that the station has become militarised. My hours are from 12 noon to 5 o'clock. This includes the men's dinner-hour and the washing of the kitchen. They eat and smoke when I am there, and loll on the little bench. They are Belgians and I am English, and one is always being warned that the English can't be too careful! We are entertaining 40,000 Belgians in England, but it must be done "carefully."

[Page Heading: THIEVING AND GIVING]

It is a great bore out here that everything is stolen. One can hardly lay a thing down for an instant that it isn't taken. To-day my Thermos flask in a leather case, in which I carry my lunch, was prigged from the kitchen. Things like metal cups are stolen by the score, and everyone begs! Even well-to-do people are always asking for something, and they simply whine for tobacco. The fact is, I think, the English are giving things away with



their usual generosity and want of discrimination, and—it is a horrid word—they are already pauperising a nice lot of people. I can't help thinking that the thing is being run on wrong lines. We should have given or lent what was necessary to the Belgian Government, and let them undertake to provide for soldiers and refugees through the proper channels. No lasting good ever came of gifts—every child begs for cigarettes, and they begin smoking at five years old.



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I often think of our poor at home, and wish I had a few sacks full of things for them! I have not myself come across any instances of poverty nearly as bad as I have seen in England. I understand from Dr. Joos and other Belgians who know about these things that there is still a good deal of money tucked away in this country. I hope there is, and we all want to help the Belgians over a bad time, but it would be better and more dignified for them to get it through their own Government.

I had tea with Lady Bagot the other day, and afterwards I had a chat with Prince Francis at the English Mission. Another afternoon I went down to the Kursaal Hotel for tea. The stuffy sitting-room there is always filled with knickerbockered, leather-coated ladies and with officers in dark blue uniform, who talk loudly and pat the barmaid's cheeks. She seems to expect it; it is almost etiquette. A cup of bad tea, some German trophies examined and discussed, and then I came away with a "British" longing for skirts for my ladies, and for something graceful and (odious word) dainty about them. Yesterday evening Lady Bagot dined with me. This Villa is the only comfortable place I have been in since the war began: it makes an amazing difference to my health.

It is odd to have to admit that one has hardly ever been unhappy for a long time before this war. The year my brother died, the year one went through a tragedy, the year of deadly dullness in the country—but now it isn't so much a personal matter. War and the sound of guns, and the sense of destruction and death abroad, the solitude of it, and the disappointing people! Oh, and the poor wounded—the poor, smelly, dirty wounded, whom one sees all day, and for whom one just sticks this out.

I have only twice been for a drive out here, and I have not seen a single place of interest, nor, indeed, a single interesting person connected with the war. That, I suppose, is the result of being a "cuisiniere!" It is rather strange to me, because for a very long time I always seem to have had the best of things. To-day I hear of this General or that Secretary, or this great personage or that important functionary, but the only people whom I see are three little Sisters and two Belgian cooks.

To give up work seems to me a little like divorcing a husband. There is a feeling of failure about it, and the sense that one is giving up what one has undertaken to do. So, however dull or tiresome husband or work may be, one mustn't give them up.

[Page Heading: THE POWER OF THE BIBLE]

6 March.—To-day I have been thinking, as I have often thought, that the real power of the Bible is that it is a Universal Human Document. The world is based upon sentiment—*i.e.*, the personality of man and his feelings brought to bear upon facts. It is also the world's dynamic force. Now, the books of the Bible—especially, perhaps, the magical, beautiful Psalms—are the most tender and sentimental (the word has been misused, of course) that were ever written. They express the thoughts and feelings of generations of men who always did express their thoughts and feelings, and thought no shame of it.

And so we northern people, with our passionate inarticulateness, love to find ourselves expressed in the old pages.



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I find in the Gospels one of the few complaints of Christ. "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" All one has ever felt is said for one in a phrase, all that one finds most isolating in the world is put into one sentence. There is a wan feeling of wonder in it; "so long," and yet you think that of me! "so long," and yet such absolute inability to read my character! "so long," and yet still quite unaware of my message! The humour of it (to us) lies in the little side of it! The dear people who "thought you would like this or dislike that"—the kind givers of presents even—the little people who shop for one! The friends who invite one to their queer, soulless, thin entertainments, with their garish lights; the people who choose a book for one, who counsel one, even with importunity, to go to some play which they are "sure we shall like." "So long"—they are old friends, and yet they thought we should like that play or that book! "So long"—and yet they think one capable of certain acts or feelings which do not remotely seem to belong to one! "So long"—and yet they can't even touch one chord that responds!

We are always quite alone. The communal life is the loneliest of all, because "yet thou hast not known me." The world comes next in loneliness, but it is *big*, and with a big soul of its own. The family life is almost naive in its misunderstanding—no one listens, they just wait for pauses....

... The worship of the "sane mind" has been a little overdone, I think. The men who are prone to say of everyone that they "exaggerate a little," or "are morbid," are like weights in a scale—just, but oh, how heavy!...

... This war is fine, *fine*, FINE! I know it, and yet I don't get near the fineness except in the pages of *Punch*! I see streams of men whose language (Flemish) I don't speak, holding up protecting hands to keep people from jostling a poor wounded limb, and I watch them sleeping heavily, or eating oranges and smoking cigarettes down to the last hot stump, but I don't hear of the heroic stands which I know are made, or catch the volition of it all. Perhaps only in a voluntary army is such a thing possible. Our own boys make one's heart beat, but these poor, dumb, sodden little men, coming in caked with mud—to be patched up and sent into a hole in the ground again, are simply tragic.

[Page Heading: "THE WOMAN'S TOUCH"]

7 March.—"The woman's touch." When a woman has been down on her knees scrubbing for a week, and washing for another week, a man, returning and finding his house in order, and vaguely conscious of a newer and fresher smell about it, talks quite tenderly of "a woman's touch."...

... There are some people who never care to enter a door unless it has "passage interdite" upon it....



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... The guns are booming heavily this morning. Nothing seems to correspond. Are men really falling and dying in agonies quite close to us? I believe we ought to see less or more—be nearer the front or further from it. Or is it that nothing really changes us? Only war pictures and war letters remain as a fixed blazing standard. The soldiers in the trenches are quite as keen about sugar in their coffee as we are about tea. No wonder men have decided that one day we must put off flesh. It is far too obstrusive....

... To comfort myself I try to remember that Wellington took his old nurse with him on all his campaigns because she was the only person who washed his stocks properly...

... Surely the expense of the thing will one day put a stop to war. We are spending two million sterling per day, the French certainly as much, the Germans probably more, and Austria and Russia much more, in order to keep men most uncomfortably in unroofed graves, and to send high explosives into the air, most of which don't hit anything. Surely, if fighting was (as it is) impossible in this flooded country in winter, we might have called a truce and gone home for three months, and trained and drilled like Christians on Salisbury Plain!...

... Health—*i.e.*, bad health—obtrudes itself tiresomely. I am ill again, and, fortunately, few people notice it, so I am able to keep on. A festered hand makes me awkward; and as I wind a bandage round it and tie it with my teeth, I once more wish I was a Belgian refugee, as I am sure I would be interesting, and would get things done for me!

A sick Belgian artist, M. Rotsartz{3}, is doing a drawing of me. I go to Lady Bagot's hospital, where he is laid up, and sit to him in the intervals of soup. That little wooden hospital is the best place I have known so far. Lady Bagot is never bustled or fussy, nor even "busy," and her staff are excellent men, with the "Mark of the Lamb" on them.

I gave away a lot of things to-day to a regiment going into the trenches. The soldiers were delighted with them.

11 March.—There was a lot of firing near La Panne to-day, and a British warship was repeatedly shelled by the Germans from Nieuport. I went into Dunkirk with Mr. Clegg, and got the usual hasty shopping done. No one can ever wait a minute. If one has time to buy a newspaper one is lucky. The difficulty of communicating with anyone is great—no telephone—no letters—no motor-car. I am stranded.

[Page Heading: FRENCH MARINES]

I generally go in the train to Adinkerke with the French Marines, nice little fellows, with labels attached to them stating their "case"—not knowing where they are going or anything else—just human lives battered about and carted off. I don't even know where they get the little bit of money which they always seem able to spend on loud-smelling oranges and cigarettes. The place is littered with orange-skins—to-day I saw a long



piece lying in the form of an “S” amid the mud; and, like a story of a century old, I thought of ourselves as children throwing orange-skins round our heads and on to the floor to read the initial of our future husband, and I seemed to hear mother say, “‘S’ for Sammy—Sammy C——,” a boy with thick legs whom we secretly despised!



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I have found a whole new household of “eclopes” at Adinkerke, who want cigarettes, socks, and shoes all the time. They are a pitiful lot, with earache, toothache, and all the minor complaints which I myself find so trying, and they lie about on straw till they are able to go back to the trenches again.

The pollard willows between here and Adinkerke are all being cut down to build trenches. They were big with buds and the promise of spring.

14 March.—I went to the station yesterday, as usual. Suddenly I couldn’t stand it any more. Everyone was cleaning. I was getting swept up with straw and mopped up with dirty cloths. The kitchen work was done. I ate my lunch in a filthy little out-building and then I fled. I had to get into the open air, and I hopped on to an ambulance and drove to Dunkirk. I had a good deal to do there getting vegetables, cigarettes, *etc.*, and we got back late to the station, where I heard the Queen had paid a visit. Rather bad luck on almost the only day I have been away.

I am waiting anxiously to hear if the report of the new British advance yesterday is true. When fighting really begins we are going to be in for a big thing; one dreads it for the sake of the boys we are going to lose. I want things to start now just to get them over, but I rather envy the people who died before this unspeakable war began.

* * * * *

To Mrs. Keays-Young.

CARE OF FIELD POST OFFICE, DUNKIRK,
17 March.

MY DEAREST BABY,

[Page Heading: CAPTAIN L. M. B. SALMON]

I have (of course) been getting letters and parcels very badly lately. I am sending this home by hand, which is not allowed except on Red Cross business, but this is to ask how Lionel is, so I think I may send it. My poor Bet! What anxiety for her! This spring weather is making me long to be at home, and when people tell me the crocuses are up in the park!—well, you know London and the park belong to me! Are the catkins out? We can get flowers at Dunkirk, but not here.

Not a word of war news, because that wouldn’t be fair. A shilling wire about Lionel would satisfy me—just “Better, and Bet well,” or something of that sort.

Always, my dear,
Your loving,
S. MACNAUGHTAN.



P.S.—Your two letters and Bet's have just come. To be in touch with you again is *very* pleasant. I can't tell you what it was like to sit down to a pretty, clean breakfast to-day with my letters beside me. Someone brought them here early.

I heard to-day that I am going to be decorated by the King of the Belgians, but don't spread this broadcast, as anything might happen in war.

* * * * *

20 March.—I met an Englishman belonging to an armoured car in Dunkirk a couple of days ago. He told me that the last four days' fighting at La Bassee has cost the British 13,000 casualties. Three lines of holes in the ground, and fighting only just beginning again! Bet's fiance has been shot through the head, but is still alive. My God, the horror of it all! And England is still cheerful, I hear, and is going to hold race-meetings as usual.



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At the station to-day I saw a mad man, who fought and struggled. I thought madmen raved. This one fought silently, like a man one sees in a dream. Another soldier shook all over like an old man. Many were blind.

“On the whole,” someone said to me in England, “I suppose you are having a good time.”

There is a snowstorm to-day, and it is bitterly cold. It is very odd how many small “complaints” seem to attack one. I can’t remember the day out here when I felt well all over.

Last night some Belgians came in to dinner. It was like old times trying to get things nice. I had some flowers and a tablecloth. I believe in making a contrast with the discomfort I see out here. We forced open a piano, and had some perfect music.

21 March.—The weather is brighter to-day; the sound of firing is more distant; it is possible to think of other things besides the war.

Mrs. — came to the station this morning. I think she has the most untidy mind I have ever met with.

With all our faults, I often wish that there were more Macnaughtans in the world. Their simple and plain intelligence gives one something to work upon. Mrs. — came and told me to-day that last night “they laughed till they cried” over her attempt at making a pudding. I should have cried, only, over a woman of fifty who wasn’t able to make a pudding. She and — are twin nebulae who think themselves constellations.

* * * * *

To Miss Mary King.

CARE OF FIELD POST OFFICE, DUNKIRK,
22 March.

DEAR MARY,

My plans, like those of everybody else, are undecided because of the war. If it is going to stop in May I should like to stay till the end, but if it is likely to go on for a long time, I shall come home. I don’t think hot soup (which is my business) can be wanted much longer, as the warm weather will be coming.

I have been asked to take over full charge of a hospital here. It is a great compliment, but I have almost decided to refuse. I have other duties, and I have some important writing to do, as I am busy with a book on the war. I begin work as early as ever, and then go to my kitchen.



[Page Heading: LONGING FOR HOME]

When I do come home I want to be in my own house, and I am longing to be back. Many of my friends go backwards and forwards to England all the time, but when I return, I should like to stay.

I am in wonderfully comfortable rooms at present, and the landlady is most kind and attentive. She gives me a morning cup of tea, and the care and comfort are making me much better. I get some soup before I go off to my station, and last night I was really a fine lady. When I came in tired, the landlady, who is a Belgian, took off my boots for me!

When I come home I think I'll lie in bed all day, and poor old Mary will get quite thin again nursing me. The things you will have to do for me, and all the pretty things I shall see and have, are a great pleasure to think about!



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Yours truly,
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

CHAPTER V

THE SPRING OFFENSIVE

Villa les Chrysanthemes, La Panne.—I have been to London for a few days to see about the publication of my little war book. I got frightful neuralgia there, and find that as soon as I begin to rest I get ill.

I went to a daffodil show, and found myself in the very hall where the military bazaar was held last year. I saw the place where the Welch had their stall. What fun we had! How many of the regiment are left? Only one officer not killed or wounded. Lord Roberts, who opened the bazaar, is gone too. All the soldiers whom I knew best have been taken, and only a few tough women seem to weather the storm of life.

I had to see publishers in London, and do a lot of business, and just when I was beginning to love it all again my holiday was over. There had been heavy fighting out here, and I felt I must come back. My dear people didn't want me to return, and were very severe on the subject, and Mary scolded me most of the time. It was all affection on their part, although it made "duty" rather a criminal affair!

There was endless difficulty about my passport when I returned. The French Consulate was besieged by people, and I had to go there at 8.30 a.m. and wait till the doors were opened, and was then told I must first go to the Foreign Office to get an order from Colonel Walker. I went down to Whitehall from Bedford Square, and was told I must get a letter from Mr. Coventry. I went to Pall Mall and Mr. Coventry said it was quite impossible to do anything for me without instructions from Mr. Sawyer. Mr. Sawyer said the only thing he could do (if I could establish my identity) was to send me to a matron who would make every enquiry about me, and perhaps in three days I might get an Anglo-French certificate, through which Mr. Coventry might be induced to give me a letter to give to Colonel Walker, who might then sign the passport, which I could then take to Bedford Square to be vise{4}.

I got Sir John Furley to identify me, and then began a dogged going from place to place and from official to official till at last I got the thing through. I felt just like a Russian being "broken." There is a regular system, I believe, in Russia of wearing people out by this sort of official tyranny. I do not know anything more tiring or more discouraging! I had all my papers in order—my passport{5}, my "laissez passer," a letter from Mr. Bevan, explaining who I was and asking for "every facility" for me, and my photograph, properly stamped. I am now so loaded with papers that I feel as if I were carrying a library about with me. Oh, give me intelligent women to do things for me! The best-run



things I have seen since the war began have been our women's unit at Antwerp and Lady Bagot's hospital at Adinkerke.

[Page Heading: QUARRELLING]



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I came back refreshed. I think everyone (every woman) out here has noticed how indifferent and really “nasty” people are to each other at the front. It is one of the singular things about the war, because one always hears it said that it is deepening people’s characters, purifying them, and so on. As far as my experience goes, it has shown me the reverse. I have seldom known so much quarrelling, and there is a sort of queer unhappiness which has nothing to do with the actual war or loss of friends. I can’t be mistaken about it, because I see it on all sides.

At the — hospital men and women alike are quarrelling all the time. Resignations are frequent. So-and-so has got So-and-so turned out; someone has written to the committee in London to report on someone else; a nice doctor is dismissed. Every nurse has given notice at different times. Most people are hurt and sore about something. Love seems quite at a discount, and one can’t help wondering if Hate can be infectious! It is all frightfully disappointing, for surely one’s heart beat high when one made up one’s mind to do what one could for suffering Belgium and for the sake of the English name.

Those two poor girls at —! I know they meant well, and had high ideas of what they were going to do. Now they “use langwidge” to each other (although I know a very strong affection binds them), and very, very strong that language is.

Poor souls, the people here aren’t a bit happy. I wonder if the work is sufficiently “sanctified.” One never knows. Lady Bagot’s is the happiest and most serene place here; her men are Church Army people, and they have evening prayers in the ward. It *does* make a difference.

Scandals also exist out here, but they are merely silly, I think, and very unnecessary, though a little conventionality wouldn’t hurt anyone. Sometimes I think it would be better if we were all at home, for Belgians are particular, and I hate breeches and gaiters for girls, and a silly way of going on. I do wish people could sometimes leave sex at home, but they never seem to. I wonder if Crusaders came back with scandals attached to their names!

I got back here in one of those rushes of work that come in war time when fighting is near. At first no car could be spared to meet me at Boulogne, so I had to wait at the Hotel Maurice for two or three days. I didn’t mind much as I met such a lot of English friends, and also visited some interesting hospitals; but I knew by the thousands of wounded coming in that things must be busy at the front, and this made one champ one’s bit.

The Canadians and English who poured in from Ypres were terribly damaged, and the asphyxiating gas seems to have been simply diabolical. It was awful to see human beings so mangled, and I never get one bit accustomed to it. The streets were full of British soldiers, and the hospitals swarmed with wounded. I went to visit the Casino



one. The bright sun streamed through lowered blinds on hundreds of beds, and on stretchers lying between them. Many Canadians were there, and rows of British. God! how they were knocked about! The vast rooms echoed to the cries of pain. The men were vowing they could never face shells and hand grenades any more. They were so newly wounded, poor boys; but they come up smiling when their country calls again.



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But it *isn't right*. This damage to human life is horrible. It is madness to slaughter these thousands of young men. Almost at last, in a rage, one feels inclined to cry out against the sheer imbecility of it. Why bring lives into the world and shell them out of it with jagged pieces of iron, and knives thrust through their quivering flesh? The pain of it is all too much. I am *sick* with seeing suffering.

[Page Heading: DUNKIRK SHELLED]

On Thursday, April 29th, Mr. Cooper, and another man came for us, and we left Boulogne. At Dunkirk we could hardly credit our eyes—the place had been shelled that very afternoon! I never saw such a look of bewilderment and horror as there was on all faces. No one had ever dreamed that the place could be hit by a German gun, yet here were houses falling as if by magic, and no one knew for a moment where on earth or in heaven the shells were coming from. Some people said they came from the sea, but the houses I saw hadn't been hit from the sea, which lies north, but from the east. Others talked of an armoured train, but armoured trains don't carry 15-inch shells. So all anyone could do was to *gape* with sheer astonishment.

Dunkirk, that safest of places, the haven to which we were all to fly when Furnes or La Panne were bombarded! Everybody contradicted one, of course, when one declared that no naval gun had been at work, but the fact remains that a long-range field-piece had been hidden at Leke, and Dunkirk was shelled for three days, and, as far as I know, may be shelled again. The inhabitants have all fled. The shops are not even shut; one could help oneself to anything! The “*etat major*” has left, and so have all the officials; 23,000 tickets have been taken at the railway station, and the road to Calais is{6} blocked with fleeing refugees.

It was rather odd that the day I left here and passed through Furnes it was being shelled, and we had to wait a little while before we could get through; and when I arrived at Dunkirk the bombardment was just over, and a huge shell-hole prevented us passing down a certain road.

Well, I got back to my work at Adinkerke in the midst of the fighting, and reached it just as the sun was setting. What a scene at the station, where I stopped before reaching home to leave the chairs and things I had bought for the hospital there! They were bringing in civilians wounded at Ypres and Poperinghe, which place also has been shelled (and yet we say we are advancing!), and there were natives also from Nieuport.

[Page Heading: WOUNDED WOMEN AND CHILDREN]



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One whole ambulance was filled with wounded children. I think King Herod himself might have been sorry for them. Wee things in splints, or with their curly heads bandaged; tiny mites, looking with wonder at their hands swathed in linen; babies with their tender flesh torn, and older children crying with terror. There were two tiny things seated opposite each other on a big stretcher playing with dolls, and a little Christmas-card sort of baby in a red hood had had its mother and father killed beside it. Another little mite belonged to no one at all. Who could tell whether its parents had been killed or not? I am afraid many of them will never find their relations again. In the general scrimmage everyone gets lost. If this isn't frightfulness enough, God in heaven help us!

On the platform was a row of women lying on stretchers. They were decent-looking brown-haired matrons for the most part, and it looked unnatural and ghastly to see them lying there. One big railway compartment was slung with their stretchers, and some young men in uniform nursed the babies. I shall never forget that railway compartment as long as I live. A man in khaki appeared, thoughtful, as our people always are, and brought a box of groceries with him, and sweet biscuits for the children, and other things. Thank Heaven for the English!

At the hospital it was really awful, and the doctors were working in shifts of twenty-four hours at a time.

I left my tables, chairs, trays, *etc.*, for the hospital at the station, and returned early the next day, for numbers of wounded were still coming in. I wanted slippers for everyone, but my Belgian helpers had given a hundred pairs of mine away in my absence. They were overworked a little, I think, so I overlooked the fact that they lost their tempers rather badly. Besides, I will *not* quarrel. In a small kitchen it would be too ridiculous. The three little people fight among themselves, but I don't fancy I was made for that sort of thing.

There was nothing but work for some time. My "eclopes" had been entirely neglected, and no one had even bothered to buy vegetables for the men.

On Sunday, May 2nd, I went to see Dr. de Page's hospital. I saw a baby three weeks old with both his feet wounded. His mother came in one mass of wounds, and died on the operating table—a young mother, and a pretty one. A young man with tears in his eyes looked at the baby, and then said, "A jolly good shot at fifteen miles."

They can't help making jokes.

There were two Scots lying in a little room—both gunners, who had been hit at Nieuport. One, Ochterlony from Arbroath, had an eye shot away, and some other wounds; the other, McDonald, had seven bad injuries. Ochterlony talked a good deal about his eyes, till McDonald rolled his head round on the pillow, and remarked briefly, "I'd swop my stomach for your eyes."



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Sunday wasn't such a nasty day as I usually have—in fact, Sunday never is. But that station, with its glaring hot platform, its hotter kitchen, and its smells, takes a bit of sticking. I have discovered one thing about Belgium. Everything smells exactly alike. To-day there have been presented to my nose four different things purporting to have different odours, drains, some cheese, tobacco, and a bunch of lilac. There was no difference at all in the smells!

[Page Heading: WAR WEARINESS]

I am much struck by the feeling of sheer weariness and disgust at the war which prevails at present. People are “soul sick” of it. A man told me last night that he longed to be wounded so that he might go home honourably. Amongst all the volunteer corps I notice the same thing. “Fed up” is the expression they all use, fed up with the suffering they see, fed up even with red crosses and khaki.

When one thinks of primrose woods at home, and birds singing, and apple-blossom against blue sky, and the park with its flower-beds newly planted, and the fresh-watered streets, and women in pretty dresses—but one mustn't!

6 May.—Mrs. Guest arrived here to stay yesterday, and her chauffeur, Mr. Wood, dined here. It is nice to be no longer quite alone. Last night we were talking about how horrible war is. Mrs. Guest told me of a sight she had herself seen. Some men, horribly wounded, were being sent away by rail in a covered waggon (“fourgon”). One man had only his mouth left in his face. He was raving mad, and raged up and down the van, trampling on other men's wounded and broken limbs.

Certainly war is a pretty game, and we must go on singing “Tipperary,” and saying what fun it is. A young friend of mine at home gave me a pamphlet (price 2d.) written by a spinster friend of hers who had never left England, proving what a good thing this war was for us all. When I said I saw another aspect of it, the kind, soothing suggestion was that I must be a little over-tired.

7 May.—They say La Panne is to be bombarded to-day. The Queen has left. Some people fussed a good deal, but if one bothered one's poor head about every rumour of this sort (mostly “dropped from a German aeroplane”) where would one be?

I was much touched when some people at home clubbed together and sent me out a little car a short time ago. But, alas! it had not been chosen with judgment, and is no use. It has been rather a bother to me, and now it must go back. Mr. Carlile drove it up from Dunkirk, and it broke down six times, and then had to be left in a ditch while he got another car to tow it home. Since then it has lain at the station.

I can't get anyone to come and inspect it. The extraordinary habit which prevails here of saying “No” to every request makes things difficult, for no privileges can be bought.



Sometimes, when I hear people ask for the salt, I fancy the answer will be, “Certainly not.” Two of our own chauffeurs live quite close to the station: they say they are busy, and can’t look at my car. One smiles, and says: “When you *have* time I shall be so grateful, *etc.*” Inwardly one is feeling that if one could *roar* just for once it would be a relief.



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Sometimes at home I have felt a little embarrassed by the love people have shown me—as if I have somehow deceived them into thinking I was nicer than I really am. Out here I have to try to remember that I have a few friends! In London I couldn't understand it when people praised me or said kind things.

There is only one straight tip for Belgium—have a car, and understand it yourself. Never did I feel so helpless without one. But the roads are too bad and too crowded to begin to learn to drive, and there are difficulties about a garage.

[Page Heading: MY CAR]

This evening Mr. Wood and I went to Hoogstadt, and towed that *corpse*—my car—up to La Panne for —— to inspect. The whole Belgian army seemed to gather round us as we proceeded on our toilsome journey, with breaking tow-ropes (for the “corpse” is heavy) and defective steering-gear. *They* were amused. I was just cracking with fatigue. Needless to say, —— didn't come. As the car was a present I can't send it back without the authority of a chauffeur. If I keep it any longer they will say I used it and broke it....

There were some fearful bad cases at Hoogstadt to-day, and we were touched to see an old man sitting beside his unconscious son and keeping the flies off him, while he sobbed in great gusts. One Belgian officer told us that the hardest thing he had to do in the war was to give the order to fire on a German regiment which was advancing with Belgian women and children in front of it. He gave the order, and saw these helpless creatures shot down before his eyes.

At the Yser the other night two German regiments got across the river and found themselves surrounded. One regiment surrendered, and the men of the other coolly turned their guns on it and shot their comrades down.

Some of our corps were evacuating women and children the other day. One man, seeing his wife and daughter stretched out on the ground, went mad, and ran up and down the field screaming. We see a lot of madness.

8 May.—The guns sound rather near this morning, and the windows shake. One never knows what is happening till the wounded come in. I sat with my watch in my hand and counted the sound of bursting shells. There were 32 in one minute. The firing is continuous, and very loud, and living men are under this fire at this moment, “mown down,” “wiped out,” as the horrible terms go. I loathe even the sound of a bugle now. This carnage is too horrible. If people can't “realise” let them come near the guns.

They were shelling Furnes again when I was at Steenkerke the other day, and it was a strange sound to hear the shells whizzing over the peaceful fields. One heard them coming, and they passed overhead to fall on the old town. Under them the brown cattle



fed unheeding, and old women hoed undisturbed, and the sinking sun threw long shadows on the grass. And then a busy ambulance would fly past on the road; one caught a glimpse of blood-covered forms. "Yes, a few wounded, and two or three killed."



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Old women are the most courageous creatures on this earth. When everyone else has fled from a place you can see them sitting by their cottage doors or hoeing turnips in the line of fire.

It was touching to see a little family of terrified children sheltering with their mother in a roadside Calvary when the shells were coming over. The poor young mother was holding up her baby to Christ on His cross.

[Page Heading: THE CRUCIFIX UNDAMAGED]

There is a matter which seems almost more than a coincidence, and one which has been too often remarked to be ignored, and that is, that in the midst of ruins which are almost totally destroyed the figure of Christ in some niche often remains untouched. I have seen it myself, and many writers have commented on the fact. Sometimes it is only a crucifix on some humble wall, or it may be a shrine in a church. The solitary figure remains and stands—often with arms raised to bless. At Neuve Chapelle one learns that, although the havoc is like that wrought by an earthquake, and the very dead have been uprooted there, a crucifix stands at the cross-roads at the north end of the village, and the pitiful Christ still stretches out His hands. At His feet lie the dead bodies of young soldiers. At Nieuport I noticed a shrine over a doorway in the church standing peacefully among the ruins, and at Pervyse also one remained, until the tower reeled and fell with an explosion from beneath, which was deliberately ordered to prevent accidents from falling masonry.

I had to go to Dunkirk this afternoon and while I was there I heard that the *Lusitania* had been torpedoed and sunk with 1,600 souls on board her. What change will this make in the situation? Is America any use to us except in the matter of supplies, and are we not getting these through as it is? A nation like that ought to have an army or a navy.

Dunkirk was nearly deserted owing to the bombardment, and it was difficult to find a shop open to buy vegetables for my soup-kitchen. Still, I enjoyed my afternoon. There was a chance that shelling might begin again at any time, and a bitter wind blew up clouds of prickly dust and sand; but it was a great relief to be out in the open and away from smells, and to have one's view no longer bounded by a line of rails. God help us! What a year this has been! It tires me even to think of being happy again, cheerfulness has become such an effort.

10 May.—I went to see my Scottish gunner at the hospital to-day. He said, "I can't forget that night," and burst out crying. "That night" he had been wounded in seven places, and then had to crawl to a "dug-out" by himself for shelter.

Strong healthy men lie inert in these hospitals. Many of them have face and head wounds. I saw one splendid young fellow, with a beautiful face, and straight clear eyes

of a sort of forget-me-not blue. He won't be able to speak again, as his jaw is shot away. The man next him was being fed through the nose.



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The matron told me to-day that last night a man came in from Nieuport with the base of a shell ("the bit they make into ash trays," she said) embedded in him. His clothing had been carried in with it. He died, of course.

One of our friends has been helping with stretcher work, removing civilians. He was carrying away a girl shot to pieces, and with her clothing in rags. He took her head, and a young Belgian took her feet, and the Belgian looked round and said quietly, "This is my fiancee."

[Page Heading: THE "LUSITANIA"]

11 May.—To-day being madame's washing day—we ring the changes on the "nettoyage," "le grand nettoyage," and "le lavage"—everything was late. The newspaper came in, and was full of such words as "horror," "resentment," "indignation," about the *Lusitania*, but that won't give us back our ship or our men. I wish we could do more and say less, but the Press must talk, and always does so "with its mouth." M. Rotsartz came to breakfast. The guns had been going all night long, there was a sense of something in the air, and I fretted against platitudes in French and madame's washing. At last I got away, and went to the sea front, for the sound of bursting shells had become tremendous.

It was a sort of British morning, with a fresh British breeze blowing our own blessed waves, and there, in its grey grandeur, stood off a British man-of-war, blazing away at the coast. The Germans answered by shells, which fell a bit wide, and must have startled the fishes (but no one else) by the splash they made. There were long, swift torpedo-boats, with two great white wings of cloven foam at their bows, and a great flourish of it in their wake, moving along under a canopy of their own black smoke. It was the smoke of good British coal, from pits where grimy workmen dwell in the black country, and British sweat has to get it out of the ground. Our grey lady was burning plenty of it, and when she had done her work, she put up a banner of smoke, and steamed away with a splendid air of dignity across the white-flecked sea. One knew the men on board her! Probably not a heart beat quicker by a second for all the German shells, probably dinner was served as usual, and men got their tubs and had their clothes brushed when it was all over.

I went down to my kitchen a little late, but I had seen something that Drake never saw—a bit of modern sea-fighting. And in the evening, when I returned, my grey mistress had come back again. The sun was westering now, and the sea had turned to gold, and the grey lady looked black against the glare, but the fire of her guns was brighter than the evening sunset, and she was a spit-fire, after all, this dignified queen, and she, "let 'em have it," too, while the long, lean torpedo-boats looked on.

I went to the kitchen; I gave out jam, I distributed socks, I heard the fussy importance of minor officials, but I had something to work on since I had seen the grey lady at work.



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In the evening I dined quietly on the barge with Miss Close and Maxine Elliott. We had a game of bridge—a thing I had not seen for a year and more (the last time I played was down in Surrey at the Grange!), and the little gathering on the old timbered barge was pleasant.

Some terrible stories of the war are coming through from the front. An officer told us that when they take a trench, the only thing which describes what the place is like is strawberry jam. Another said that in one trench the sides were falling, and the Germans used corpses to make a wall, and kept them in with piles fixed into the ground. Hundreds of men remain unburied.

[Page Heading: GERMAN PRISONERS]

Some people say that the German gunners are chained to their guns. There were six Germans at the station to-day, two wounded and four prisoners. Individually I always like them, and it is useless to say I don't. They are all polite and grateful, and I thought to-day, when the prisoners were surrounded by a gaping crowd, that they bore themselves very well. After all, one can't expect a whole nation of mad dogs. A Scotchman said, "The ones opposite us (*i.e.*, in the trenches) were a very respectable lot of men."

The German prisoners' letters contain news that battalions of British suffragettes have arrived at the front, and they warn officers not to be captured by these!

12 May.—To-day, when I got to the station, I was asked to remove an old couple who sat there hand in hand, covered with blood. The old woman had her arm blown off, and the man's hand was badly injured. We took them to de Page's hospital.

The firing has been continuous for the last few days, and men coming in from Ypres and Dixmude and Nieuport say that the losses on both sides have been enormous. There were four Belgian officers who lived opposite my villa, whom one used to see going in and out. Last night all were killed.

At Dixmude the other day the Duke of Westminster went to the French bureau to get his passport vise. The clerks were just leaving, but he begged them to remain a minute or two and to do his little business. They did so, and came to the door to see him off, but a shell came hurtling in and killed them both, and of a woman who stood near there was literally nothing left.

Last night — and I were talking about the *gossip*, which would fill ten unpublishable volumes out here.... Why do these people come out to the front? Give me men for war, and no one else except nuns. Things may be all right, but the Belgians are horrified, and I hate them to "say things" of the English. The grim part of it is that I don't believe I



personally hear one half of what goes on and what is being said. They are afraid of shocking me, I believe.

The craze for men baffles me. I see women, *dead tired*, perk up and begin to be sparkling as soon as a man appears; and when they are alone they just seem to sink back into apathy and fatigue. Why won't these mad creatures stop at home? They *are* the exception, but war seems to bring them out. It really is intolerable, and I hate it for women's sake, and for England's.

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The other day I heard some ladies having a rather forced discussion on moral questions, loud and frank.... Shades of my modest ancestresses! Is this war time, and in a room filled with men and smoke and drink, are women in knickerbockers discussing such things? I know I have got to “let out tucks,” but surely not quite so far!

Beautiful women and fast women should be chained up. Let men meet their God with their conscience clear. Most of them will be killed before the war is over. Surely the least we can do is not to offer them temptation. Death and destruction, and horror and wonderful heroism, seem so near and so transcendent, and then, quite close at hand, one finds evil doings.

[Page Heading: A TREASURE]

14 May.—I heard two little stories to-day, one of a British soldier limping painfully through Poperinghe with a horrid wound in his arm and thigh.

“You seem badly wounded,” a friend of mine said to him.

“Yus,” said the soldier; “there were a German, and he wounded me in three places, but”—he drew from under his arm a treasure, and his poor dirty face was transformed by a delighted grin—“I got his bloody helmet.”

Another story was of an English officer telephoning from a church-tower. He gave all his directions clearly and distinctly, and never even hinted that the Germans had taken the town and were approaching the church. He just went on talking, till at last, as the tramp of footsteps sounded on the belfry stairs, he said, “Don’t take any notice of any further information. I am going.” He went—all the brave ones seem to go—and those were the last words he spoke.

Rhodes Moorhouse flew low over the German lines the other day, in order to bombard the German station at Courtrai. He planed down to 300 feet, and became the target for a hundred guns. In the murderous fire he was wounded, and might have descended, but he was determined not to let the Germans have his machine. He planed down to 100 feet in order to gather speed. At this elevation he was hit again, and mortally wounded, but he flew on alone to the British lines—like a shot bird heading for its own nest. He didn’t even stop at the first aerodrome he came to, but sailed on—always alone—to his base, made a good landing, handed over his machine, and died.

In the hospitals what heroism one finds! One splendid fellow of 6 feet 2 inches had both his legs and both his arms amputated. He turned round to the doctor and said, smiling, “I shan’t have to complain of beds being too short now!” And when someone came and sat with him in his deadly pain, he remarked in his gentle way, “I am afraid I am taking up all your time.” His old father and mother arrived after he was dead.



Ah! if one could hear more, surely one would do more! But this hole-and-corner way of doing warfare damps all enthusiasm and stifles recruiting. Why are we allowed to know nothing until the news is stale? Yesterday I heard at first hand of the treatment of some civilians by Germans, and I visited a village to hear from the *people themselves* what had happened.



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My work isn't so heavy now, and, much as I want to be here when the "forward movement" comes, I believe I ought to use the small amount of kick I have left in me to go to give lectures on the war to men in ammunition works at home. They all seem to be slacking and drinking, and I believe one might rouse them if one went oneself, and told stories of heroism, and tales of the front. The British authorities out here seem to think I ought to go home and give lectures at various centres, and I have heard from Vickers-Maxim's people that they want me to come.

I think I'll arrive in London about the 1st of June, as there is a good deal to arrange, and I have to see heads of departments. One has to forget all about *parties* in politics, and get help from Lloyd George himself. I only hope the lectures may be of some use.

* * * * *

[Page Heading: TO MRS. FFOLIOTT]

To Mrs. ffolliott.

VILLA LES CHRYSANTHEMES,
LA PANNE, BELGIUM,
16 May.

DARLING OLD POOT,

One line, to wish you with all my heart a happy birthday. I shan't forget you on the 22nd. Will you buy yourself some little thing with the enclosed cheque?

This war becomes a terrible strain. I don't know what we shall do when four nephews, a brother-in-law, and a nephew to be are in the field.

I get quite sick with the loss of life that is going on; the whole land seems under the shadow of death. I shall always think it an idiotic way of settling disputes to plug pieces of iron and steel into innocent boys and men. But the bravery is simply wonderful. I could tell you stories which are almost unbelievable of British courage and fortitude.

I am coming home soon to give some lectures, and then I hope to come out here again.

Bless you, dear Poot,

Your loving
SARAH.

* * * * *



17 May.—I saw a most curious thing to-day. A soldier in the Pavilion St. Vincent showed me five 5-franc pieces which he had had in his pocket when he was shot. A piece of shrapnel had bent the whole five until they were welded together. The shrapnel fitted into the silver exactly, and actually it was silvered by the scrape it had made against the coin. I should like to have had it, but the man valued his souvenir, so one didn't like to offer him money for it.

A young Canadian found a comrade of his nailed to a door, and stone dead, of course. When did he die?

A Belgian doctor told Mrs. Wynne that in looking through a German officer's knapsack he found a quantity of children's hands—a pretty souvenir! I write these things down because they must be known, and if I go home to lecture to munition-workers I suppose I must tell them of these barbarities.

Meanwhile, the German prisoners in England are getting country houses placed at their service, electric light, baths, *etc.*, and they say girls are allowed to come and play lawn tennis with them. The ships where they are interned are costing us L86,000 a month. Our own men imprisoned in Germany are starved, and beaten, and spat upon. They sleep on mouldy straw, have no sanitation, and in winter weather their coats, and sometimes even their tunics, were taken from them.



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Fortunately, reprisals need not come from us. Talk to Zouaves and Turcos and the French. God help Germany if they ever penetrate to the Rhine.

A young man—Mr. Shoppe—is occupied in flying low over the gun that is bombarding Dunkirk in order to take a photograph of it.

It seems to me a great deal to ask of young men to give their lives when life must be so sweet, but no one seems to grudge their all. Of some one hears touching and splendid stories; others, one knows, die all alone, gasping out their last breath painfully, with no one at hand to give them even a cup of water. No one has a tale to tell of them. God, perhaps, heard a last prayer or a last groan before Death came with its merciful hand and put an end to the intolerable pain.

How much can a man endure? A Frenchman at the Zouave Poste au Secours looked calmly on while the remains of his arm were cut away the other night. Many operations are performed without chloroform (because they take a shorter time) at the French hospital.

[Page Heading: A HEAVENLY HOST]

I heard from R. to-day. He says the story about Mons is true. The English were retreating, and Kluck was following hard after them. He wired to the Kaiser that he had "got the English," but this is what men say happened. A cloud came out of a clear day and stood between the two armies, and in the cloud men saw the chariots and horses of a heavenly host. Kluck turned back from pursuing, and the English went on unharmed.

This may be true, or it may be the result of men's fancy or of their imagination. But there is one vision which no one can deny, and which each man who cares to look may see for himself. It is the vision of what lies beyond sacrifice; and in that bright and heavenly atmosphere we shall see—we may, indeed, see to-day—the forms of those who have fallen. They fight still for England, unharmed now and for ever more, warriors on the side of right, captains of the host which no man can number, champions of all that we hold good. They are marching on ahead, and we hope to follow; and when we all meet, and the roll is called, we shall find them still cheery, I think, still unwavering, and answering to their good English names, which they carried unstained through a score of fights, at what price God and a few comrades know.

CHAPTER VI

LAST DAYS IN FLANDERS

19 May.—In order to get material for my lecture to munition-workers I was very anxious to see more of the war for myself than is possible at a soup-kitchen, and I asked at the British Mission if I might be given permission to go into the British lines. Major —— in



giving me a flat refusal, was a little pompous and important I thought, and he said it was *impossible* to get near the British.

To-day I lunched on the barge with Miss Close, and we took her car and drove to Poperinghe. I hardly like to write this even in a diary, I am so seldom naughty! But I really did something very wrong for once. And the amusing part of it was that military orders made going to Poperinghe so impossible that no one molested us! We passed all the sentries with a flourish of our green papers, and drove on to the typhoid hospital with only a few Tommies gaping at us.



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I was amazed at the pleasure that wrong-doing gives, and regretted my desperately strict past life! Oh, the freedom of that day in the open air! the joy of seeing trees after looking at one wretched line of rails for nine months! Lilacs were abloom in every garden, and buttercups made the fields look yellow. The air was misty—one could hardly have gone to Poperinghe except in a mist, as it was being so constantly shelled—but in the mist the trees had a queer light on them which made the early green look a deeper and stronger colour than I have ever seen it. There appeared to be a sort of glare under the mist, and the fresh wet landscape, with its top-heavy sky, radiated with some light of its own. Oh, the intoxication of that damp, wet drive, with a fine rain in our faces, and the car bounding under us on the “pave”! If I am interned till the end of the war I don’t care a bit! I have had some fresh air, and I have been away for one whole day from the smell of soup and drains.

How describe it all? The dear sense of guilt first, and then the still dearer British soldiers, all ready with some cheery, cheeky remark as they sat in carts under the wet trees. They were our brethren—blue-eyed and fair-haired, and with their old clumsy ways, which one seemed to be seeing plainly for the first time, or, rather, recognising for the first time. It was all part of England, and a day out. The officers were taking exercise, of course, with dogs, and in the rain. We are never less than English! Tomorrow we may be killed, but to-day we will put on thick boots, and take the dogs for a run in the rain.

[Page Heading: AT POPERINGHE]

Poperinghe was deserted, of course. Its busy cobbled streets were quite empty except for a few strolling soldiers in khaki, and just here and there the same toothless old woman who is always the last to leave a doomed city. At the typhoid hospital we gravely offered the cases of milk which we had brought with us as an earnest of our good conduct, but even the hospital was nearly empty. However, a secretary offered us a cup of tea, and in the dining-room we found Madame van den Steen, who had just returned to take up her noble work again. She was at Dinant, at her own chateau, when war broke out, and she was most interesting, and able to tell me things at first hand. The German methods are pretty well known now, but she told me a great deal which only women talking together could discuss. When a village or town was taken, the women inhabitants were quite at the mercy of the Germans.

Continuing, Madame van den Steen said that all the filthiness that could be thought of was committed—the furniture, cupboards, flowerpots, and even bridge-tables, being sullied by these brutes. Children had their hands cut off, and one woman, at least, at Dinant was crucified. One’s pen won’t write more. The horrors upset one too much. All the babies born about that time died; their mothers had been so shocked and frightened....



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Of Ypres Madame said, "It smells of lilac and death." Some Englishmen were looking for the body of a comrade there, and failed to find it amongst the ruins of the burning and devastated town. By seeming chance they opened the door of a house which still stood, and found in a room within an old man of eighty-six, sitting placidly in a chair. He said, "How do you do?" and bade them be seated, and when they exclaimed, aghast at his being still in Ypres, he replied that he was paralysed and couldn't move, but that he knew God would send someone to take him away; and he smiled gently at them, and was taken away in their ambulance.

Madame gave me a shell-case, and asked Mr. Thompson if he would bring in his large piece to show us. He wheeled it across the hall, as no one could lift it, and this was only the *base* of a 15-inch shell. It was picked up in the garden of the hospital, and had travelled fifteen miles!

The other day I went to see for myself some of the poor refugees at Coxide. There were twenty-five people in one small cottage. Some were sleeping in a cart. One weeping woman, wearing the little black woollen cap which all the women wear, told me that she and her family had to fly from their little farm at Lombaertzyde because it was being shelled by the Germans, but afterwards, when all seemed quiet, they went back to their home to save the cows. Alas, the Germans were there! They made this woman (who was expecting a baby) and all her family stand in a row, and one girl of twenty, the eldest daughter, was shot before their eyes. When the poor mother begged for the body of her child it was refused her.

The *Times* list of atrocities is too frightful, and all the evidence has been sifted and proved to be true.

20 May.—Yesterday I arranged with Major du Pont about leaving the station to go home and give lectures in England. Then I had a good deal to do, so I abandoned my plan of visiting refugees with Etta Close, and stayed on at the station. At 5.30 I came back to La Panne to see Countess de Caraman Chimay, the dame d'honneur of the Queen of the Belgians; then I went on to dine with the nurses at the "Ocean." Here I heard that Adinkerke, which I had just left, was being shelled. Fortunately, the station being there, I hope the inhabitants got away; but it was unpleasant to hear the sound of guns so near. I knew the three Belgian Sisters would be all right, as they have a good cellar at their house, and I could trust Lady Bagot's staff to look after her. All the same, it was a horrible night, full of anxiety, and there seems little doubt that La Panne will be shelled any day. My one wish is—let's all behave well.

I watched the sunset over the sea, and longed to be in England; but, naturally, one means to stick it, and not leave at a nasty time.

[Page Heading: SOCKS]



21 May.—Yesterday, at the station, there was a poor fellow lying on a stretcher, battered and wounded, as they all are, an eye gone, and a foot bandaged. His toes were exposed, and I went and got him rather a gay pair of socks to pull on over his “pansement.” He gave me a twinkle out of his remaining eye, and said, “Madame, in those socks I could take Constantinople!”



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The work is slack for the moment, but a great attack is expected at Nieuport, and they say the Kaiser is behind the lines there. His presence hasn't brought luck so far, and I hope it won't this time.

I went to tea with Miss Close on the barge, and afterwards we picked up M. de la Haye, and went to see an old farm, which filled me with joy. The buildings here, except at the larger towns, are not interesting or beautiful, but this lovely old house was evidently once a summer palace of the bishops (perhaps of Bruges). It is called "Beau Garde," and lies off the Coxide road. One enters what must once have been a splendid courtyard, but it is now filled indiscriminately with soldiers and pigs. The chapel still stands, with the Bishops' Arms on the wall; and there are Spanish windows in the old house, and a curious dog-kennel built into the wall. Over the gateway some massive beams have been roughly painted in dark blue, and these, covered in ivy, and with the old dim-toned bricks above, make a scheme of colour which is simply enchanting. Some wind-torn trees and the sand-dunes, piled in miniature mountains, form a delicious background to the old place.

I also went with Etta Close to visit some of the refugees for whom she has done so much, and in the sweet spring sunshine I took a little walk in the fields with M. de la Haye, so altogether it was a real nice day. There were so few wounded that I was able to have a chat with each of them, and the poor "eclopes" were happy gambling for ha'pence in the garden of the St. Vincent.

In the evening I went up to the Kursaal to dine with Mrs. Wynne. Our two new warriors who have come out with ambulances have stood this *absolutely* quiet time for three days, and are now leaving because it is too dangerous! The shells at Adinkerke never came near them, as they were deputed to drive to Nieuport only. (N.B.—Mrs. Wynne continues to drive there every night!) Eight men of our corps have funked, no women.

I am going to take a week's rest before going home, in the hope that I won't arrive looking as ill as I usually do. I hardly know how to celebrate my holiday, as it is the first time since I came out here that I haven't gone to the station except on Sundays.

[Page Heading: SUNDAY]

23 May, Sunday.—I went to Morning Service at the "Ocean" to-day, then walked back with Prince Alexander. In the evening we drove to the Hoogstadt hospital. The King of the Belgians was just saying good-bye to the staff, after paying a surprise visit. He has a splendid face, and the simplicity of his plain dark uniform makes the strength and goodness of it all the more striking.

As I was waiting at the hospital the Germans began firing at a little village a mile off. It is always strange to hear the shells whizzing over the fields. We drove out to see the

Yser and the floods, which have protected us all the winter. With glasses one could have seen the German lines.



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Spring is coming late, and with a marvel of green. A wind blows in from the sea, and the lilacs nod from over the hedge. The tender corn rustles its soft little chimes, and all across it the wind sends arpeggio chords of delicate music, like a harp played on silver strings. A great big horse-chestnut tree, carrying its flowers proudly like a bouquet, showers the road with petals, and the shy hedges put up a screen all laced and decorated with white may. It just seems as if Mother Earth had become young again, and was tossing her babies up to the summer sky, and the wind played hide-and-seek, or peep-bo, or some other ridiculous game, with them, and made the summer babies as glad and as mischievous as himself. Only the guns boom all the time, and my poor little French Marines, who drink far too much, and have the manners of princes, come in on ambulances in the evening, or at the "poste" a hole is dug for them in the ground, and they are laid down gently in their dirty coats.

Mother Earth, with her new-born babies, stops laughing for a moment, and says to me, "It's all right, my dear; they have to come back to me, as all my children and all their works must do. Why make any complaint? For a time they are happy, playing and building their little castles, and making their little books, and weaving stories and wreaths of flowers; but the stories, the castles, the flowers I gave them, and they themselves, all come back to me at last—the leaves next autumn, and the boy you love perhaps to-morrow."

Oh, Father God, Mother Earth, as it was in the beginning will it be in the end? Will you give us and them a good time again, and will the spring burst into singing in some other country? I don't know. I don't know.

Only I do know this—I am sure of it now for the first time, and it is worth while spending a long, long winter within the sound of guns in order to know it—that death brings release, not release from mere suffering or pain, but in some strange and unknown way it brings freedom. Soldiers realise it: they have been more terrified than their own mothers will ever know, and their very spines have melted under the shrieking sound of shells, and then comes the day when they "don't mind." Death stalks just as near as ever, but his face is suddenly quite kind. A stray bullet or a piece of shell may come, but what does it matter? This is the day when the soldier learns to stroll when the shrapnel is falling, and to look up and laugh when the murderous bullet pings close by.

[Page Heading: SOUVENIRS]

War souvenirs! There are heaps of them, and I hate them all; pieces of jagged shell, helmets with bullets through them, pieces of burnt aeroplanes, scraps of clothing rent by a bayonet. Yesterday, at the station, I saw a sick Zouave nursing a German summer casquette. He said quietly, being very sick: "The burgomaster chez moi wanted one. Yes, I had to kill a German officer for it—ce n'est rien de quoi—I got a ball in my leg too, mais mon burgomaster sera tres content d'avoir une casquette d'un boche." Our own

men leave their trenches and go out into the open to get these horrible things, with their battered exterior and the suggestion of pomade inside.



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Yesterday, by chance, I went to the “Ierlinck” to see Mr. Clegg. I met Mr. Hubert Walter, lately arrived from England, and asked him to dine, so both he and Mr. Clegg came, and Madame van der Gienst. It was so like England to talk to Mr. Walter again, and to learn news of everyone, and we actually sat up till 10.30, and had a great pow-wow.

Mr. Walter attaches great importance to the fact that the Germans are courageous in victory, but their spirits go down at once under defeat, and he thinks that even one decisive defeat would do wonders in the way of bringing the war to an end. The Russians are preparing for a winter campaign. I look at all my “woollies,” and wonder if I had better save some for 1916. What new horrors will have been invented by that time? I hear the Germans are throwing vitriol now! In their results I hate hand grenades more than anything. The poor burnt faces which have been wounded by them are hardly human sometimes, and in their bandages they have a suggestion of something tragically grotesque.

26 May.—We had a great day—rather, a glorious day—at the station yesterday. In the morning I heard that “les anglais” were arriving there, and, although the news was a little startling, I couldn’t go early to Adinkerke because I felt so seedy. However, I got off at last in a “camion,” and when I arrived I found the little station hospital and salle and Lady Bagot’s hospital crowded with men in khaki.

We don’t know yet all that it means. The fighting has been fierce and awful at Ypres. Are the hospitals at the base all crowded? Is there no more room for our men? What numbers of them have fallen? Who is killed, and who is left?

All questions are idle for the moment. Only I have a postcard to say that Colin is at the front, so I suppose until the war is over I shall go on being very sick with anxiety. At night I say to myself, as the guns boom on, “Is he lying out in the open with a bullet through his heart?” and in the morning I say, “Is he safe in hospital, and wounded, or is he still with his men, making them follow him (in the way he has) wherever he likes to lead them?” God knows, and the War Office, and neither tells us much.

[Page Heading: GAS-POISONING]

The men at the station were nearly all cases of asphyxiation by gas. Unless one had actually seen the immediate results one could hardly have credited it. In a day or two the soldiers may leave off twitching and shuddering as they breathe, and may be able to draw a breath fairly, but an hour or two after they have inhaled the deadly German gas is an awful time to see one’s men. Most of them yesterday were in bed, but a few sat on canvas chairs round the empty stove in the salle, and all slept, even those in deadly pain. Sleep comes to these tired soldiers like a death. They succumb to it. They are difficult to rouse. They are oblivious, and want nothing else. They are able to sleep anywhere and in any position, but even in sleep they twitch and shudder, and their sides heave like those of spent horses.



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It struck me very forcibly that what was immediately wanted was a long draught for each of them of some clean, simple stimulant. I went and bought them red wine, and I could see that this seemed to do good, and I went to the barge and got bottles of whisky and a quantity of distilled water, and we dosed the men. It seemed to do them a wonderful lot of good, and in some way acted as an antidote to the poison. Also, it pulled them together, and they got some quieter sleep afterwards.

Towards the afternoon, indeed, all but one Irishman seemed to be better, and then we began to be cheery, and the scene at the station took colour and became intensely alive. The khaki-clad forms roused themselves, and (of course) wanted a wash. Also, they sat on their beds and produced pocket-combs, and ran them through their hair. In their dirt and rags these poor battered, breathless men began to try to be smart again. It was a tragedy and a comedy all in one. A Highlander, in a shrunk kilt and with long bare legs, had his head bound about with bandages till it looked like a great melon, and his sleeve dangled empty from his great-coat. Others of the Seaforths, and mere boys of the Highland Territorials, wore khaki shirts over their tartan, and these were bullet-torn and hanging in great rents. And some boys still wore their caps with the wee dambrod pattern jauntily, and some had no caps to wear, and some were all daubed about with white bandages stained crimson, and none had hose, and few had brogues. They had breathed poison and received shrapnel, and none of them had slept since Sunday night. They had had an “awful doing,” and no one knew how the battle at Ypres had gone, but these were men yet—walking upright when they could, always civil, undismayed, intelligent, and about as like giving in as a piece of granite.

Only the young Scottish boys—the children of seventeen who had sworn in as nineteen—were longing for Loch Lomond’s side and the falls of Inversnaid. I believe the Loch Lomond lads believed that the white burn that falls over the rocks near the pier has no rival (although they have heard of Niagara and the Victoria Falls), and it’s “oor glen” and “oor country” wi’ them all. And one boy wanted his mother badly, and said so. But oh, how ready they were to be cheery! how they enjoyed their day! And, indeed, we did our best for them.

[Page Heading: A GARDEN-PARTY]

Lady Bagot’s hospital was full, and we called it her garden-party when we all had tea in the open air there. We fed them, we got them handkerchiefs, our good du Pont got them tubs, the cook heaped more coal on the fire, although it was very hot, and made soup in buckets, and then began a curious stage scene which I shall never forget. It was on the platform of the station. A band appeared from somewhere, and, out of compliment to the English, played “God Save the King.” All the dirty bandaged men stood at attention. As they did so an armoured



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train backed slowly into the station and an aeroplane swooped overhead. At Drury Lane one would have said that the staging had been overdone, that the clothes were too ragged, the men too gaunt and too much wounded, and that by no stretch of imagination could a band be playing “God save the King” while a square painted train called “Lou-lou” steamed in, looking like a child’s giant gaudy toy, and an aeroplane fussed overhead.

Everyone had stories to tell, but I think the best of them concerns the arrival of the wounded last night. All the beds in Lady Bagot’s little hospital were full, and the Belgians who occupied them insisted on getting up and giving their places to the English. They lay on the floor or stood on their feet all night, and someone told me that even very sick men leapt from their beds to give them to their Allies.

God help us, what a mixture it all is! Here were men talking of the very *sound* of bayonets on human flesh; here were men not only asphyxiated by gas, but blinded by the pepper that the Germans mix with it; and here were men determined to give no quarter—yet they were babbling of Loch Lomond’s side and their mothers, and fighting as to who should give up their beds to each other.

Of course the day ended with the exchange of souvenirs, and the soldiers pulled buttons off their coats and badges out of their caps. And when it was all over, every mother’s son of them rolled round and went to sleep. Most of them, I thought, had a curious air of innocence about them as they slept.

27 May.—I took a great bundle of newspapers and magazines to the “Jellicoe” men to-day. English current literature isn’t a waste out here, and I often wonder why people don’t buy more. They all fall upon my tableful, and generally bear away much of it.

The war news, even in the ever optimistic English press, is *not* good, but not nearly as bad as what seems to me the real condition of affairs. The shortage of high explosives is very great. At Nieuport yesterday Mrs. Wynne said to a French officer, “Things seem quiet here to-day,” at which he laughed, and said, “I suppose even Germans will stop firing when they know you have no ammunition.”

[Page Heading: SLACKERS IN GLASGOW]

In France the armament works are going night and day, and the men work in shifts of 24 hours—even the women only get one day off in a week—while in Glasgow the men are sticking out for strict labour conditions, and are “slacking” from Friday night till late on Tuesday morning, and then demanding extra pay for overtime. And this in face of the bare facts that since October the Allies have lost ground in Russia; in Belgium they remain as they were; and in France they have advanced a few kilometres. At Ypres the



Germans are now within a mile of us, and the losses there are terrible. Whom shall we ever see again?

Men come out to die now, not to fight. One order from a sergeant was, "You've got to take that trench. You can't do it. Get on!"



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A captain was heard saying to a gunner subaltern: "We must go back and get that gun." The subaltern said, "We shall be killed, but it doesn't matter." The captain echoed heavily, "No, it doesn't matter," and they went back.

Sir William Ramsay, speaking about the war, says that half the adult male population of Europe will be killed before it is over. Those who are left will be the feeble ones, the slackers, the unfit, and the cowards. It is good to be left to breed from such stock!

It is odd to me how confusing is the want of difference that has come to pass between the living and the not living. Cottages and little towns seem to be part of nature. One regrets their destruction almost as one regrets the loss of life. They have a tragic look, with their dishevelled windows and stripped roofs and skeleton frames. Life has become so cheap that cottages seem almost as valuable. "It doesn't matter"—nothing matters. I rather dread going back to London, because there things may begin to seem important and one will be in bondage again. Here our men are going to their death laughing because it doesn't matter.

There is a proud humility about my countrymen which few people have yet realised. It is the outcome of nursery days and public schools. No one is allowed to think much of himself in either place, so when he dies, "It doesn't matter."

God help the boys! If they only knew how much it mattered to *us*! Life is over for them. We don't even know for certain that they will live again. But their *spirit*, as I know it, can never die. I am not sure about the survival of personality. I care, but I do not know. But I do know that by these simple, glorious, uncomplaining deaths, some higher, purer, more splendid place is reached, some release is found from the heavy weight of foolish, sticky, burdensome, contemptible things. These heroes do "rise," and we "rise" with them. Could Christ himself desire a better resurrection?

[Page Heading: LARKS]

28 May.—I am busy getting things prepared for going home—my lecture, two articles, *etc.* I did not go to the station to-day, but worked till 3 o'clock, and then walked over to St. Idesbald. How I wish I could have been out-of-doors more since I came here. It is such a wonderful country, all sky. No wonder there are painters in Belgium. During the winter it was too wet to see much, and I was always in the kitchen, but now I could kiss the very ground with the little roses on it amongst the Dunes. Larks sing at St. Idesbald, and nightingales. Some fine night I mean to walk out there and listen.

29 May.—To-day, according to promise, Mr. Bevan took me into Nieuport. It was very difficult to get permission to go there, but Mr. Bevan got it from the British Mission on the plea that I was going to give lectures at home.

“The worst of going to Nieuport,” said Major Tyrell, “is that you won’t be likely to see home again.”



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Mr. Bevan called at 10 o'clock with the faithful MacEwan, and we went first to the Cabour hospital, which I always like so much, and where the large pleasure-grounds make things healthy and quiet for the patients. Then we had a tyre out of order, so had to go on to Dunkirk, where I met Mr. Sarrel and his friend Mr. Hanson—Vice-Consul at Constantinople—and they lunched with us while the car was being doctored.

At last we started towards Nieuport, but before we got there we found a motor-car in a ditch, and its owner with a cut on his head and his arm broken, so we had to pick him up and take him to Coxide. It was a clear, bright day, with all the trees swishing the sky, and Mr. Bevan and MacEwan did nothing all the time but tell me how dangerous it was, and they pointed out every place on the road where they had picked up dead men or found people blown to pieces. This was lively for me, and the amusing part of it was that I think they did it from a belated sense of responsibility.

It is as difficult to find words to describe Nieuport as it is to talk of metaphysics in slang. The words don't seem invented that will convey that haunting sense of desolation, that supreme quiet under the shock of continually firing guns. Hardly anything is left now of the little homely bits that, when I saw the place last autumn, reminded one that this was once a city of living human beings. *Then* one saw a few interiors—exposed, it is true, and damaged, but still of this world. Now it is one big grave, the grave of a city, and the grave of many of its inhabitants. Here, at a corner house, nine ladies lie under the piled-up debris that once made their home. There some soldiers met their death, and some crumbling bricks are heaped over them too. The houses are all fallen—some outer walls remain, but I hardly saw a roof left—and everywhere there are empty window-frames and skeleton rafters.

[Page Heading: NIEUPOINT]

I never knew so surely that a town can live and can die, and it set one wondering whether Life means a thing as a whole and Death simply disintegration. A perfect crystal, chemists tell us, has the elements of life in it and may be said to live. Destruction and decay mean death; separation and disintegration mean death. In this way we die, a crystal dies, a flower or a city dies. Nieuport is dead. There isn't a heart-beat left to throb in it. Thousands and thousands of shells have fallen into it, and at night the nightingale sings there, and by day the river flows gently under the ruined bridge. Every tree in a wood near by is torn and beheaded; hardly one has the top remaining. The new green pushes out amongst the blackened trunks.

One speaks low in Nieuport, the place is so horribly dead.

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Mr. Bevan showed me a shell-hole 42 feet across, made by one single “soixante-quinze” shell. Every field is pitted with holes, and where there are stretches of pale-coloured mud the round pits dotted all over it give one the impression of an immense Gruyere cheese. The streets, heaped with debris, and with houses fallen helplessly forward into their midst, were full of sunshine. From ruined cottages—whose insecure walls tottered—one saw here and there some Zouaves or a little French “marin” appear. Most of these ran out with letters in their hands for us to post. Heaven knows what they can have to write about from that grave!

Some beautiful pillars of the cathedral still stand, and the tower, full of holes, has not yet bent its head. Lieutenant Shoppe, R.N., sits up there all day, and takes observations, with the shells knocking gaily against the walls. One day the tower will fall or its stones will be pierced, and then Lieutenant Shoppe, R.N., will be killed, as the Belgian “observateur” was killed at Oostkerke the other day. He still hangs there across a beam for all the world to see. His arms are stretched out, and his body lies head downwards, and no one can go near the dead Belgian because the tower is too unsafe now. One day perhaps it will fall altogether and bury him.

Meanwhile, in the tower of the ruined cathedral at Nieuport Shoppe sits in his shirt-sleeves, with his telephone beside him and his observation instruments. His small staff are with him. They are immensely interested in the range of a gun and the accuracy of a hit. I believe they do not think of anything else. No doubt the tower shakes a great deal when a shell hits it, and no doubt the number of holes in its sides is daily becoming more numerous. Each morning that Shoppe leaves home to spend his day in the tower he runs an excellent chance of being killed, and in the evening he returns and eats a good dinner in rather an uncomfortable hotel.

In the cathedral, and amongst its crumbling battered aisles, a strange peace rests. The pitiful columns of the church stand here and there—the roof has long since gone. On its most sheltered side is the little graveyard, filled with crosses, where the dead lie. Here and there a shell has entered and torn a corpse from its resting-place, and bones lie scattered. On other graves a few simple flowers are laid.

We went to see the dim cellars which form the two “postes au secours.” In the inner recess of one a doctor has a bed, in the outer cave some soldiers were eating food. There is no light even during the day except from the doorway. At Nieuport the Germans put in 3,000 shells in one day. Nothing is left. If there ever was anything to loot, it has been looted. One doesn’t know what lies under the debris. Here one sees the inside of a piano and a few twisted strings, and there a metal umbrella-stand. I saw one wrought-iron sign hanging from the falling walls of an inn.



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Mr. Bevan and I wandered about in the unearthly quiet, which persisted even when the guns began to blaze away close by us, whizzing shells over our heads, and we walked down to the river, and saw the few boards which are all that remain of the bridge. Afterwards a German shell landed with its unpleasant noise in the middle of the street; but we had wandered up a by-way, and so escaped it by a minute or less.

In a little burned house, where only a piece of blackened wall remained, I found a little crucifix which impressed me very much—it stood out against the smoke-stained walls with a sort of grandeur of pity about it. The legs had been shot away or burned, but “the hands were stretched out still.”

As we came away firing began all round about, and we saw the toss of smoke as the shells fell.

[Page Heading: STEENKERKE]

31 May.—We went to Steenkerke yesterday and called on Mrs. Klocker, and saw a terrible infirmary, which must be put right. It isn't fit for dogs.

At the station to-day our poor Irishman died. Ah, it was terrible! His lungs never recovered from the gas, and he breathed his last difficult breath at 5 o'clock.

In the evening a Zeppelin flew overhead on its way to England.

[Page Heading: NIGHTINGALES]

There is a nightingale in a wood near here. He seems to sing louder and more purely the heavier the fighting that is going on. When men are murdering each other he loses himself in a rapture, of song, recalling all the old joyous things which one used to know.

The poetry of life seems to be over. The war songs are forced and foolish. There is no time for reading, and no one looks at pictures, but the nightingale sings on, and the long-ago spirit of youth looks out through Time's strong bars, and speaks of evenings in old, dim woods at home, and of girlish, splendid drives home from some dance where “he” was, when we watched the dawn break, and saw our mother sleeping in the carriage, and wondered what it would be like not to “thrill” all the time, and to sleep when the nightingale was singing.

Later there came the time when the song of the throbbing nightingale made one impatient, because it sang in intolerable silence, and one ached for the roar of things, and for the clash of endeavour and for the strain of purpose. Peace was at a discount then, and struggle seemed to be the eternal good. The silent woods had no word for one, the nightingale was only a mate singing a love-song, and one wanted something more than that.



And afterwards, when the struggle and the strain were given one in abundant measure, the song of the nightingale came in the lulls that occurred in one's busy life. One grew to connect it with coffee out on the lawn in some houses of surpassing comfort, where (years and years ago) one dressed for dinner, and a crinkly housemaid brought hot water to one's room. The song went on above the smug comfort



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of things, and the amusing conversation, and the smell of good cigars. Within, we saw some pleasant drawing-room, with lamps and a big table set with candles and cards, and we felt that the nightingale provided a very charming orchestra. We listened to it as we listened to amusing conversation, with a sense of comfortable enjoyment and rest. Why talk of the time when it sang of breaking hearts and high endeavour never satisfied, and things which no one ever knew or guessed except oneself?

It sings now above the sound of death and of tears. Sometimes I think to myself that God has sent his angel to open the prison doors when I hear that bird in the little wood close beside the tram-way line.

On Thursday, June 3rd, I drove in the "bug" to Boulogne, and took the steamer to England. I went through a nasty time in Belgium, but now a good deal of queer affection is shown me, and I believe they all rather like me in the corps.

* * * * *

The following brief impression of Miss Macnaughtan's work at the soup-kitchen forms the most appropriate conclusion to her story of her experiences in Belgium. She cut it out of some paper, and sent it home to a friend in England, and we seem to learn from it—more than from any words of her own—how much she did to help our Allies in their hour of need:

"It was dark when my car stopped at the little station of Adinkerke, where I had been invited to visit a soup-kitchen established there by a Scotchwoman. In peace she is a distinguished author; in war she is being a mother to such of the Belgian Army as are lucky enough to pass her way. I can see her now, against a background of big soup-boilers and cooking-stoves, handing out woollen gloves and mufflers to the men who were to be on sentry duty along the line that night. It was bitterly cold, and the comforts were gratefully received. "For a long time this most versatile lady made every drop of the soup that was prepared for the men herself, and she has, so a Belgian military doctor says, saved more lives than he has with her timely cups of hot, nourishing food. It is only the most seriously wounded men who are taken to the field hospital, the others are carried straight to the railway-station, and have to wait there, sometimes for many hours, till a train can take them on. Even then trains carrying the wounded have constantly to be shunted to let troop trains through. But, thanks to the enterprise and hard work of this clever little lady, there is always a plentiful supply of hot food ready for the men who, weak from loss of blood, are often besides faint with hunger."



PART II

AT HOME

HOW THE MESSAGE WAS DELIVERED

October, 1915.—So much has happened since I came home from Flanders in June, and I have not had one moment in which to write of it. I found my house occupied when I returned, so I went to the Petrograd Hotel and stayed there, going out of London for Sundays.



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Everyone I met in England seemed absorbed in pale children with adenoids. No one cared much about the war. Children in houses nowadays require food at weird hours, not roast mutton and a good plain Christian pudding, but, "You will excuse our beginning, I know, dear, Jane has to have her massage after lunch, and Tom has to do his exercises, and baby has to learn to breathe." This one has its ears strapped, and that one is "nervous" and must be "understood," and nothing is talked of but children. My mother would never have a doctor in the house; "nervousness" was called bad temper, and was dosed, and stooping was called "a trick," and was smacked. The children I now see eat far too much, and when they finish off lunch with gravy drunk out of tumblers it makes me feel very unwell.

I went to the Breitmeyers, at Rushton Hall, Kettering; it's a fine place, but I was too tired to enjoy anything but a bed. The next Sunday I stayed at Chenies, with the Duchess of Bedford—always a favourite resort of mine—and another week I went to Welwyn.

I met a few old men at these places, but no one else. Everyone is at the front. The houses generally have wounded soldiers in them, and these play croquet with a nurse on the lawn, or smoke in the sun. None of them want to go back to fight. They seem tired, and talk of the trenches as "proper 'ell."

There is always a little too much walking about at a "week-end." One feels tired and stiff on Monday. I well remember last summer having to take people three times to a distant water garden—talking all the time, too! People are so kind in making it pleasant that they wear one out.

[Page Heading: ERITH]

All the time I was in London I was preparing my campaign of lecturing. I began with Vickers-Maxim works at Erith, on Wednesday, 9th June, and on the 8th I went to stay with the Cameron Heads. There was great bustle and preparation for my lecture, Press people in the house at all hours of the day, and so on. A great bore for my poor friends; but they were so good about it, and I loved being with them.

The lecture was rather a red-letter occasion for me, everyone praising, the Press very attentive, *etc.*, *etc.* The audience promised well for future things, and the emotion that was stirred nearly bowled myself over. In some of the hushes that came one could hear men crying. The Scott Gattys and a few of my own friends came to "stand by," and we all drove down to Erith in motor-cars, and returned to supper with the Vickers at 10.30.

The next day old Vickers sent for me and asked me to name my own price for my lectures, but I couldn't mix money up with the message, so I refused all pay, and feel happy that I did so. I can't, and won't, profit by this war. I'd rather lose—I am losing—but that doesn't matter. Nothing matters much now. The former things are swept away, and all the old barriers are disappearing. Our old gods of possession and wealth are

crumbling, and class distinctions don't count, and even life and death are pretty much the same thing.



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The Jews say the Messiah will come after the war. I think He is here already—but on a cross as of yore!

I went up to Glasgow to make arrangements there, and my task wasn't an easy one. Somehow I knew that I must speak, that I must arouse slackers, and tell rotters about what is going on. One goes forth (led in a way), and only then does one realise that one is going in unmasked to ship-building yards and munition sheds and docks, and that one is quite a small woman, alone, and up against a big thing.

Always the answer I got was the same: "The men are not working; forty per cent. are slackers. The output of shells is not what it ought to be, but they *won't* listen!"

In the face of this I arranged seven meetings in seven days, to take place early in August, and then I went back to give my lecture in the Queen's Hall, London. I took the large Hall, because if one has a message to deliver one had better deliver it to as many people as possible. It was rather a breathless undertaking, but people turned up splendidly, and I had a full house. Sir F. Lloyd gave me the band of the Coldstream Guards, and things went with a good swing.

I am still wondering how I did it. The whole "campaign" has already got rather an unreal atmosphere about it, and often, after crowded meetings, I have come home and lain in the dark and have seen nothing but a sea of faces, and eyes all turned my way. It has been a most curious and unexpected experience, but England did not realise the war, and she did not realise the wave of heroism that is sweeping over the world, and I had to tell about it.

Well, my lectures went on—Erith, Queen's Hall, Sheffield (a splendid meeting, 3,000 people inside the hall and 300 turned away at the door!), Barrow-in-Furness. I gave two lectures at Barrow, at 3 and 7.30. They seemed very popular. In the evening quite a demonstration—pipe band playing "Auld lang syne," and much cheering. After that Newcastle, and back to the south again to speak there. Everywhere I took my magic-lantern and showed my pictures, and I told "good stories" to attract people to the meetings, although my heart was, and is, nearly breaking all the time.

[Page Heading: GLASGOW]

Then I began the Glasgow campaign—Parkhead, Whiteinch, Rose-Bank, Dumbarton, Greenock, Beardmore's, Denny's, Armour's, *etc., etc.* Everywhere there were big audiences, and although I would have spoken to two listeners gladly, I was still more glad to see the halls filled. The cheers of horny-handed workmen when they are really roused just get me by the throat till I can't speak for a minute or two!

At one place I spoke from a lorry in the dinner-hour. All the men, with blackened faces, crowded round the car, and others swung from the iron girders, while some perched,

like queer bronze images, on pieces of machinery. They were all very intent, and very polite and courteous, no interruptions at any of the meetings. A keen interest was shown in the war pictures, and the cheers were deafening sometimes.



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After Glasgow I went to dear Clemmie Waring's, at Lennel, and found her house full of convalescent officers, and she herself very happy with them and her new baby. I really wanted to rest, and meant to enjoy five days of repose; but I gave a lecture the first night, and then had a sort of breakdown and took to my bed. However, that had to be got over, and I went down to Wales at the end of the week. The Butes gave me their own rooms at Cardiff Castle, and a nice housekeeper looked after me.

[Page Heading: CARDIFF]

There followed a strange fortnight in that ugly old fortress, with its fine stone-work and the execrable decorations covering every inch of it. The days passed oddly. I did a little writing, and I saw my committee, whom I like. Colonel Dennis is an excellent fellow, and so are Mr. Needle, Mr. Vivian Reece{7}, and Mr. Harrison. A Mr. Howse acted as secretary.

The first day I gave a dock-gate meeting, and spoke from a lorry, and that night I had my great meeting at Cardiff. Sir Frank Younghusband came down for it, and the Mayor took the chair. The audience was enthusiastic, and every place was filled. At one moment they all rose to their feet, and holding up their hands swore to fight for the right till right was won. It was one of the scenes I shall always remember.

Every day after that I used to have tea and an egg at 5 o'clock, and a motor would come with one of my committee to take me to different places of meeting. It was generally up the Rhondda Valley that we went, and I came to know well that westward drive, with the sun setting behind the hills and turning the Taff river to gold. Every night we went a little further and a little higher—Aberdare, Aberystwyth, Toney Pandy, Tonepentre, *etc.*, *etc.* I gave fourteen lectures in thirteen days. Generally, I spoke in chapels, and from the pulpit, and this seemed to give me the chance I wanted to speak all my mind to these people, and to ask them and teach them what Power, and Possession, and Freedom really meant. Oh, it was wonderful! The rapt faces of the miners, the hush of the big buildings, and then the sudden burst of cheering!

At one meeting there was a bumptious-looking man, with a bald head, whom I remember. He took up his position just over the clock in the gallery. He listened critically, talked a good deal, and made remarks. I began to speak straight at him, without looking at him, and quite suddenly I saw him, as I spoke of our men at the war, cover his face and burst into tears.

The children were the only drawback. They were attracted by the idea of the magic-lantern, and used to come to the meetings and keep older people out. My lectures were not meant for children, and I had to adopt the plan of showing the pictures first and then telling the youngsters to go, and settling down to a talk with the older ones, who always remained behind voluntarily.



We had some times which I can never forget; nor can I forget those dark drives from far up in the hills, and the mists in the valley, and my own aching fatigue as I got back about midnight. From 5 till 12.30 every night I was on the stretch.



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In the day-time I used to wander round the garden. One always meets someone whom one knows. I had lunch with the Tylers one day, and tea with the Plymouths. It was still, bright autumn weather, and the trees were gold in the ugly garden with the black river running through it. I got a few lessons in motor driving, and I spoke at the hospital one afternoon. I took the opportunity of getting a dress made at rather a good tailor's, and time passed in a manner quite solitary till the evenings.

Never before have I spent a year of so much solitude, and yet I have been with people during my work. I think I know now what thousands of men and women living alone and working are feeling. I wish I could help them. There won't be many young marriages now. What are we to do for girls all alone?

* * * * *

To Mrs. Keays-Young.

CARDIFF CASTLE, CARDIFF,
31 August, 1915.

DEAREST BABY,

Many thanks for your letter, which I got on my way through London. I spent one night there to see about some work I am having done in the house.

I have a drawer quite full of press-cuttings, and I do not know what is in any of them. It is difficult to choose anything of interest, as they are all a good deal alike, and all sound my trumpet very loudly; but I enclose one specimen.

We had meetings every night in Glasgow. They were mostly badly organised and well attended. Here I have an agent arranging everything, and two of my meetings have been enormous. The first was at the dock-gates in the open air, and the second in the Town Hall. The band of the Welch Regiment played, and Mr. Glover conducted, but nothing is the same, of course. Alan is at Porthcawl, and came to see me this morning.

The war news could hardly be worse, and yet I am told by men who get sealed information from the Foreign Office that worse is coming.

Poor Russia! She wants help more than anyone. Her wounded are quite untended. I go there next month.

The King of the Belgians has made me Chevalier de l'Ordre de Leopold.

Love to all.
Yours ever,
S.

* * * * *

Press-cutting enclosed in Miss Macnaughtan's letter:

"STORIES OF THE WAR."

CARDIFF LECTURE BY MISS MACNAUGHTAN.

AUTHORESS'S APPEAL.

TESTING-TIME OF NATIONAL CHARACTER.

[Page Heading: A CROWDED MEETING]

A large and enthusiastic audience assembled at the Park-hall, Cardiff, on Monday evening, to hear and see Miss Macnaughtan's "Stories and Pictures of the War." Miss Macnaughtan is a well-known authoress, whose works have attained a world-wide reputation, and, in addition to her travels in almost every corner of the globe, she has had actual experience of warfare at the bombardment of Rio, in the Balkans, the South African War,



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and, since September last, in Belgium and Flanders. In her capacity as ministrant to wounded soldiers she has gained a unique experience of the horrors of war, and in order to bring home the realities of the situation, at the instigation of Lady Bute, she consented to address a number of meetings in South Wales. At the meeting on Monday night the Lord Mayor (Alderman J. T. Richards) presided, and in introducing Miss Macnaughtan to the audience announced that for her services in Belgium the honour of the Order of Leopold had been conferred upon her. (Applause.) We were engaged, he said, in fighting a war of right. We were not fighting only for the interests of England and our Empire, but we were fighting for the interests of humanity at large. ("Hear, hear.") Miss Macnaughtan, in the course of her address, referred to the origin of the war, and how suddenly it came upon the people of this nation, who were, for the most part, engaged in summer holidays at the time. She knew what was going on at the front, and knew what the Welch Regiment had been doing, and "I must tell you," she added, "of the splendid way in which your regiment has behaved, and how proud Cardiff must be of it." We knew very well now that this war had been arranged by Germany for many years. The Germans used to profess exceeding kindness to us, and were received on excellent terms by our Royal House, but the veil was drawn away from that nation's face, and we had it revealed as an implacable foe. The Germans had spoken for years in their own country about "The Day," and now "The Day" had arrived, and it was for everyone a day of judgment, because it was a test of character. We had to put ourselves to the test. We knew that for some time England had not been at her best. Her great heart was beating true all the time, but there had crept into England a sort of national coldness and selfishness, and a great deal too much seriousness in the matter of money and money-getting. Although this was discounted in great measure by her generosity, we appeared to the world at large as a greedy and money-getting nation. However this might be, in all parts of the world the word of an Englishman was still as good as his bond. ("Hear, hear.") Yet England, with its strikes and quarrels and class hatred, and one thing and another, was not at its best. It was well to admit that, just as they admitted the faults of those they loved best. Had any one of them failed to rally round the flag? Had they kept anything back in this great war? She hoped not. The war had tested us more than anything else, and we had responded greatly to it; and the young manhood had come out in a way that was remarkable. We knew very well that when the war was begun we were quite unprepared for it; but she would tell them this, that our army, although small, was the finest army that ever took the field. (Applause.)

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Miss Macnaughtan then related a number of interesting incidents, one of which was, that when a party of wounded Englishmen came to a station where she was tending the Belgian wounded, every wounded Belgian gave up his bed to accommodate an English soldier. The idea of a German occupation of English soil, she said, was the idea of a catastrophe that was unspeakable. People read things in the papers and thought they were exaggerated, but she had seen them, and she would show photographs of ruined Belgium which would convince them of what the Germans were now doing in the name of God. However unprepared we were for war, the wounded had been well cared for, and she thought there never was a war in which the care of the wounded had been so well managed or so efficient. (Applause.) They had to be thankful that there had been no terrible epidemic, and she could not speak too highly of the work of the nurses and doctors in the performance of their duties. This was the time for every man to do his duty, and strain every nerve and muscle to bring the war to an end and get the boys home again. (Applause.)

[Page Heading: SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND, K.C.I.E.]

Sir Francis Younghusband, K.C.I.E., spoke of Miss Macnaughtan as a very old friend, whom he had met in many parts of the Empire. In this crisis she might well have stayed at home in her comfortable residence in London, but she had sacrificed her own personal comforts in order to assist others. They must realise that this war was something much more than a war of defence of their homes. It was a fight on behalf of the whole of humanity. A staggering blow had been dealt by our relentless enemy at Belgium, which had been knocked down and trampled upon, and Germany had also dealt blow after blow at humanity by the use of poison-gas, the bombardment of seaside towns, and bombs thrown on defenceless places by Zeppelins. She had thrust aside all those rights of humanity which we had cherished as a nation as most dear to our hearts. What we were now fighting for was right, and he would put to them a resolution that we would fight for right till right had won. In response to an appeal for the endorsement of his sentiments the audience stood en masse, and with upraised hands shouted "Aye." It was a stirring moment, and must have been gratifying to the authoress, who has devoted so much of her time and energy to the comfort of the wounded soldiers.

The Lord Mayor then proposed a vote of thanks to Miss Macnaughtan for her address, and this was carried by acclamation.

Miss Macnaughtan briefly responded, and then proceeded to illustrate many of the scenes she had witnessed by lantern-slides, showing the results of bombardments and the ruin of some of the fairest domains of Belgium and France. The provision of stewards was arranged by the Cardiff Chamber of Trade, under the direction of the President (Mr. G. Clarry). During the evening the band of the 3rd Welch Regiment, under the conductorship of Bandmaster K. S. Glover, gave selections.

[Page Heading: POISON-GAS]



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A statement having been made that Miss Macnaughtan was the first to discover a remedy for the poison-gas used by the Germans, a *Western Mail* reporter interviewed the lady before the lecture on her experiences in this direction. She replied, that when the first batch of men came in from the trenches suffering from the effects of the gas, the first thing they asked was for something to drink, to take the horrible taste out of their mouths. She obtained a couple of bottles of whisky from the barge of an American lady, and some distilled water, and gave this to the soldiers, who appeared to be greatly relieved. Whenever possible, she had adopted the same course, but she was unaware that the remedy had been applied by the military authorities. Even this method of relieving their sufferings, however, was rejected by a large number of young soldiers, on the ground that they were teetotallers, but the Belgian doctors had permitted its use amongst their men.

* * * * *

SHOULD THE GERMANS COME.

FORETASTE OF HORRORS FURNISHED BY BELGIUM.

During the dinner-hour Miss Macnaughtan gave an address to workmen at the Bute Docks. An improvised platform was arranged at the back of the Seamen's Institute, and some hundreds of men gathered to hear the story that Miss Macnaughtan had to give of the war. Colonel C. S. Denniss presided, and amongst those present were Messrs. T. Vivian Rees, John Andrews, W. Cocks, A. Hope, S. Fisher, and Robinson Smith. Colonel Denniss, in a few introductory remarks, referred to Miss Macnaughtan's reputation as a writer, and stated that since the outbreak of war she had devoted herself to the noble work of helping the wounded soldiers in Belgium and France. She had come to Cardiff to tell the working-men what she had seen, with the object, if possible, of stimulating them to help forward the great cause we were fighting for. Miss Macnaughtan said she had been speaking in many parts of the country, but she was especially proud to address a meeting of Welsh working-men. Besides coming of a long line of Welsh ancestors, her brother-in-law, Colonel Young, was in command of the 9th Welch Battalion at the front, and she had also four nephews serving in the Welch Regiment. Only the day before Colonel Young had written to her: "The Welshman is the most intensely patriotic man that I know, and it is always the same thing, 'Stick it, Welch.' His patriotism is splendid, and I do not want to fight with a better man." Miss Macnaughtan then explained that she was not asking for funds, and was not speaking for employers or owners. She simply wished to tell them her experiences of the war as she had seen it, and to describe the heroism which was going on at the front. If they looked at the war from the point of view of men going out to kill each other they had a wrong conception of what was going on. She



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had been asked to speak of the conditions which might prevail should the Germans reach this country. She did not feel competent to speak on that subject, as the whole idea of Germans in this country seemed absolutely inconceivable. If the Germans were to land on our shores all the waters which surrounded this isle would not wash the land clean. She knew what the Germans were, and had seen the wreck they had made of Belgium and part of France. She knew what the women and children had suffered, and how the churches had been desecrated and demolished. It was said that this was a war of humanity, but she believed it was a war of right against wrong; and if she were asked when the war would finish, she could only say that we would fight it right on to the end until we were victorious. The Germans were beaten already, and had been beaten from the day they gave up their honour. She spoke of the heroism of the troops, and stated that since September last she had been running a soup-kitchen for the wounded. In this humble vocation she had had an opportunity of gauging the spirit of the soldiers. She had seen them sick, wounded, and dying, but had never known them give in. Why should humble villages in France without soldiers in them be shelled? That was Germany, and that was what they saw. The thing was almost inconceivable, but she had seen helpless women and children brought to the hospitals, maimed and wounded by the cruel German shells. After this war England was going to be a better country than before. Up to now there had been a national selfishness which was growing very strong, and there was a terrible love of money, which, after all, was of very little account unless it was used in the proper direction. She could tell them stories of Belgians who had had to fire upon their own women and children who were being marched in front of German troops. The power of Germany had to be crushed. The spirit of England and Wales was one in this great war, and they would not falter until they had emerged triumphant. (Applause.)

[Page Heading: A CLARION CALL]

Mr. Robinson Smith said the clarion call had been sounded, and they were prepared, if necessary, to give their last shilling, their last drop of blood, and their very selves, body, soul, and spirit, to fight for right till right had won. (Applause.)

Cheers were given for the distinguished authoress, and the proceedings terminated.

* * * * *

After Cardiff (and a most cordial send-off from my committee) I came back to London, and lectured at Eton, at the Polytechnic, and various other places, while all the time I was preparing to go to Russia, and I was also writing.



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In the year that has passed my time has been fully occupied. To begin with, when the war broke out I studied district-nursing in Walworth for a month. I attended committees, and arranged to go to Belgium, got my kit, and had a good deal of business to arrange in the way of house-letting, *etc.*, *etc.* Afterwards, I went to Antwerp, till the siege and the bombardment; then followed the flight to Ostend; after that a further flight to Furnes. Then came the winter of my work, day and night at the soup-kitchen for the wounded, a few days at home in January, then back again and to work at Adinkerke till June, when I came home to lecture.

During the year I have brought out four books, I have given thirty-five lectures, and written both stories and articles. I have gone from town to town in England, Scotland, and Wales, and I have had a good deal of anxiety and much business at home. I have paid a few visits, but not restful ones, and I have written all my own correspondence, as I have not had a secretary. I have collected funds for my work, and sent off scores of begging letters. Often I have begun work at 5.30 a.m., and I have not rested all day. As I am not very young this seems to me a pretty strenuous time!

[Page Heading: THE DEATH OF YOUTH]

Now I have let my house again, and am off “into the unknown” in Russia! I shouldn’t really mind a few days’ rest before we begin any definite work. Behind everyone I suppose at this time lurks the horror of war, the deadly fear for one’s dearest; and, above all, one feels—at least I do—that one is always, and quite palpably, in the shadow of the death of youth—beautiful youth, happy and healthy and free. Always I seem to see the white faces of boys turned up to the sky, and I hear their cries and see the agony which joyous youth was never meant to bear. They are too young for it, far too young; but they lie out on the field between the trenches, and bite the mud in their frenzy of pain; and they call for their mothers, and no one comes, and they call to their friends, but no one hears. There is a roar of battle and of bursting shells, and who can listen to a boy’s groans and his shrieks of pain? This is war.

A nation or a people want more sea-board or more trade, so they begin to kill youth, and to torture and to burn, and God himself may ask, “Where is my beautiful flock?” No one answers. It is war. We must expect a “list of casualties.” “The Germans have lost more than we have done;” “We must go on, even if the war lasts ten years;” “A million more men are needed”—thus the fools called men talk! But Youth looks up with haggard eyes, and Youth, grown old, learns that Death alone is merciful.

One sees even in soldiers’ jokes that the thought of death is not far off. I said to one man, “You have had a narrow squeak,” and he replied, “I don’t mind if I get there first so long as I can stoke up for those Germans.” Another, clasping the hand of his dead Captain, said, “Put plenty of sandbags round heaven, sir, and don’t let a German through.”



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The other day, when the forward movement was made in France and Belgium, Charles's Regiment, the 9th Welch, was told to attack at a certain point, which could only be reached across an open space raked by machine-gun fire. They were not given the order to move for twelve days, during which time the men hardly slept. When the charge had to be made the roar of guns made speaking quite impossible, so directions were given by sending up rockets. When the rockets appeared, not a single man delayed an instant in making the attack. One young officer, in the trench where Charles was, had a football, and this he flung over the parapet, and shouting, "Come on, boys!" he and the men of the regiment played football in the open and in front of the guns. Right across the gun-raked level they kicked the ball, and when they reached the enemy's lines only a few of them were left.

Charles wrote, "I am too old to see boys killed."

Colonel Walton, with a handful of his regiment, was the only officer to get through the three lines of the enemy's trenches, and he and his men dug themselves in. Just in front of them where they paused, he saw a fine young officer come along the road on a motor bicycle, carrying despatches. The next minute a high-explosive shell burst, and, to use his own words, "There was not enough of the young officer to put on a threepenny bit." Always men tell me there is nothing left to bury. One minute there is a splendid piece of upstanding, vigorous manhood, and the next there is no finding one piece of him to lay in the sod.

[Page Heading: A LESSON FOR TURKS]

The Turks seem to have forsaken their first horrible and devilish cruelties towards English prisoners. They have been taught a lesson by the Australians, who took some prisoners up to the top of a ridge and rolled them down into the Turks' trenches like balls, firing on them as they rolled. Horrible! but after that Turkish cruelties ceased.

Our own men see red since the Canadians were crucified, and I fancy no prisoners were taken for a long time after. We "censor" this or that in the newspapers, but nothing will censor men's tongues, and there is a terrible and awful tale of suffering and death and savagery going on now. Like a ghastly dream we hear of trenches taken, and the cries of men go up, "Mercy, comrade, mercy!" Sometimes they plead, poor caught and trapped and pitiful human beings, that they have wives and children who love them. The slaughter goes on, the bayonet rends open the poor body that someone loved, then comes the internal gush of blood, and another carcass is flung into the burying trench, with some lime on the top of it to prevent a smell of rotting flesh.



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My God, what does it all mean? Are men so mad? And why are they killing all our best and bravest? Our first army is gone, and surely such a company never before took the field! Outmatched by twenty to one, they stuck it at Mons and on the Aisne, and saved Paris by a miracle. All my old friends fell then—men near my own age, whom I have known in many climes—Eustace Crawley, Victor Brooke, the Goughs, and other splendid men. Now the sons of my friends are falling fast—Duncan Sim's boy, young Wilson, Neville Strutt, and scores of others. I know one case in which four brothers have fallen; another, where twins of nineteen died side by side; and this one has his eyes blown out, and that one has his leg torn off, and another goes mad; and boys, creeping back to the base holding an arm on, or bewildered by a bullet through the brain, wander out of their way till a piece of shrapnel or torn edge of shell finds them, and they fall again, with their poor boyish faces buried in the mud!

Mr. —— dined with us last night. He had been talking of his brother who was killed, and he said: "I think it makes a difference if you belong to a family which has always given its lives to the country. We are accustomed to make these sacrifices."

Thus bravely in the light of day, but when evening came and we sat together, then we knew just what the life of the boy had cost him. They tell us—these defrauded broken-hearted ones—just how tall the lad was, and how good to look at! That seems to me so sad—as if one reckoned one's love by inches! And yet it is the beauty of youth that I mourn also, and its horribly lonely death.

"They never got him further than the dressing-station," Mr. —— said; "but—he would always put up a fight, you know—he lived for four days. No, there was never any hope. Half the back of his head was shattered. But he put up a fight. My brother would always do that."

PART III

RUSSIA AND THE PERSIAN FRONT

CHAPTER I

PETROGRAD

Mrs. Wynne, Mr. Bevan, and I left London for Russia on October 16, 1915. We are attached provisionally to the Anglo-Russian hospital, with a stipulation that we are at liberty to proceed to the front with our ambulances as soon as we can get permission to do so. We understand that the Russian wounded are suffering terribly, and getting no doctors, nurses, or field ambulances. We crossed from Newcastle to Christiania in a

Norwegian boat, the *Bessheim*. It was supposed that in this ship there was less chance of being stopped, torpedoed, or otherwise inconvenienced.

We reached Christiania after a wonderfully calm crossing, and went to the Grand Hotel at 1 a.m. No rooms to be had, so we went on to the Victoria—a good old house, not fashionable, but with a nice air about it, and some solid comforts. We left on Wednesday, the 20th, at 7 a.m. This was something of a feat, as we have twenty-four boxes with us. I only claim four, and feel as if I might have brought more, but everyone has a different way of travelling, and luggage is often objected to.



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Indeed, I think this matter of travelling is one of the most curious in the world. I cannot understand why it is that to get into a train or a boat causes men and women to leave off restraint and to act in a primitive way. Why should the companionship of the open road be the supreme test of friendship? and why should one feel a certain fear of getting to know people too well on a journey? The last friends I travelled with were very careful indeed, and we used to reckon up accounts and divide the price of a bottle of “vin ordinaire” equally. My friends to-day seem inclined to do themselves very well, and to scatter largesse everywhere.

[Page Heading: STOCKHOLM]

Stockholm. 21 October.—After a long day in the train we reached Stockholm yesterday evening, and went to the usual “Grand Hotel.” This time it is very “grand,” and very expensive. Mr. Bevan has a terrible pink boudoir-bedroom, which costs L3 per night, and I have a small room on the fourth floor, which costs 17s. 6d. without a bath. There is rather a nice court in the middle of the house, with flowers and a band and tables for dinner, but the sight of everyone “doing himself well” always makes me feel a little sick. The wines and liqueurs, and the big cigars at two shillings each, and the look of repletion on men’s faces as they listen to the band after being fed, somewhat disgust me.

One’s instinct is to dislike luxury, but in war-time it seems horrible. We ourselves will probably have to rough it badly soon, so I don’t mind, but it’s a side of life that seems to me as beastly as anything I know. Fortunately, the luxury of an hotel is minimised by the fact that there are no “necessaries,” and one lives in an atmosphere of open trunks and bags, with things pulled out of them, which counterbalances crystal electric fittings and marble floors.

We rested all this morning, lunched out, and in the afternoon went to have tea with the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden. They were very delightful. The British Minister’s wife, Lady Isobel Howard, went with us. The Princess had just finished reading my “Diary of the War,” and was very nice about it. The children, who came in to tea, were the prettiest little creatures I have ever seen, with curly hair, and faces like the water-colour pictures of a hundred years ago. The Princess herself is most attractive, and reminds one of the pictures of Queen Victoria as a young woman. Her sensitive face is full of expression, and her colour comes and goes as she speaks of things that move her.

This afternoon we went to tea at the Legation with the Howards. The House is charmingly situated on the Lake, with lovely trees all about it. It isn’t quite finished yet, but will be very delightful.



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22 October.—It is very strange to find oneself in a country where war is not going on. The absence of guns and Zeppelins, the well-lighted streets, and the peace of it all, are quite striking. But the country is pro-German almost to a man! And it has been a narrow squeak to prevent war. Even now I suppose one wrong move may lead to an outbreak of hostilities, and the recent German victories may yet bring in other countries on her side. Bulgaria has been a glaring instance of siding with the one she considers the winning side (Gott strafe her!), and Greece is still wondering what to do! Thank God, I belong to a race that is full of primitive instincts! Poor old England still barges in whenever there is a fight going on, and gets her head knocked, and goes on fighting just the same, and never knows that she is heroic, but blunders on—simple-hearted, stupid, sublime!

24 October.—I went to the English church this morning with Mr. Lancelot Smith, but there was no service as the chaplain had chicken-pox! So I came home and packed, and then lunched with Mr. Eric Hambro, Mr. Lancelot Smith, and Mr. —, all rather interesting men at this crisis, when four nations at least are undecided what to do in the matter of the war.

About 6 o'clock we and our boxes got away from Stockholm. Our expenses for the few days we spent there were L60, although we had very few meals in the hotel. We had a long journey to Haparanda, where we stopped for a day. The cold was terrible and we spent the day (my birthday) on a sort of luggage barge on the river. On my last birthday we were bolting from Furnes in front of the Germans, and the birthday before that I was on the top of the Rocky Mountains.

Talking of the Rockies reminds me (did I need reminding) of Elsie Northcote, my dear friend, who married and went to live there. The other night some friends of mine gave me a little "send-off" before I left London—dinner and the Palace Theatre, where I felt like a ghost returned to earth. All the old lot were there as of yore—Viola Tree, Lady Diana Manners, Harry Lindsay, the Raymond Asquiths, *etc., etc.* I saw them all from quite far away. Lord Stanmore was in the box with us, and he it was who told me of Elsie Northcote's sudden death. It wasn't the right place to hear about it. Too many are gone or are going. My own losses are almost stupefying; and something dead within myself looks with sightless eyes on death; with groping hands I touch it sometimes, and then I know that I am dead also.

[Page Heading: LOVE AND PAIN]

There is only one thing that one can never renounce, and that is love. Love is part of one, and can't be given up. Love can't be separated from one, even by death. It comes once and remains always. It is never fulfilled; the fulfilment of love is its crucifixion; but it lives on for ever in a passion-week of pain until pain itself grows dull; and then one wishes one had been born quite a common little soul, when one would probably have been very happy.



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28 October.—We arrived at midnight last night at Petrograd. Ian Malcolm was at the hotel, and had remained up to welcome us. To-day we have been unpacking, and settling down into rather comfortable, very expensive rooms. My little box of a place costs twenty-six shillings a night. We lunched with two Russian officers and Mr. Ian Malcolm, and then I went to the British Embassy, where the other two joined me. Sir George Buchanan, our Ambassador, looks overworked and tired. Lady Georgina and I got on well together....

The day wasn't quite satisfactory, but one must remember that a queer spirit is evoked in war-time which is very difficult of analysis. Primarily there is "a right spirit renewed" in every one of us. We want to be one in the great sacrifice which war involves, and we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies in great causes, only to find that there is some strange unexplained quality of resistance meeting us everywhere.

Mary once said to me in her quaint way, "Your duty is to give to the Queen's Fund as becomes your position, and to get properly thanked."

This lady-like behaviour, combined with cheque-writing on a large scale, is always popular. It can be repeated and again repeated till cheque-writing becomes automatic. Then from nowhere there springs a curious class of persons whom one has never heard of before, with skins of invulnerable thickness and with wonderful self-confidence. They claim almost occult powers in the matter of "organisation," and they generally require pity for being overworked. For a time their names are in great circulation, and afterwards one doesn't hear very much about them. Florence Nightingale would have had no distinction nowadays. It is doubtful if she would have been allowed to work. Some quite inept person in a high position would have effectually prevented it. Most people are on the offensive against "high-souled work," and prepared to put their foot down heavily on anything so presumptuous as heroism except of the orthodox kind, and even the right kind is often not understood.

There is a story I try to tell, but something gets into my throat, and I tell it in jerks when I can.

[Page Heading: FOOTBALL UNDER FIRE]

It is the story of the men who played football across the open between the enemy's line of trenches and our own when it was raked by fire. When I had finished, a friend of mine, evidently waiting for the end of a pointless story, said, "What did they do that for?" (Oh, ye gods, have pity on men and women who suffer from fatty degeneration of the soul!)

Still, in spite of it all, the Voice comes, and has to be obeyed.



30 October.—We lunched at the Embassy yesterday to meet the Grand Duchess Victoria. She is a striking-looking woman, tall and strong, and she wore a plain dark blue cloth dress and a funny little blue silk cap, and one splendid string of pearls. At the front she does very fine work, and we offered our services to her. I have begun to write a little, but after my crowded life the days feel curiously empty. Lady Heron Maxwell came to call.

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We were telling each other spy stories the other night. Some of them were very interesting. The Germans have lately adopted the plan of writing letters in English to English prisoners of war in Germany. These, of course, are quite simple, and pass the Censor in England, but, once on the other side, they go straight to Government officials, and whereas “Dear Bill” may mean nothing to us, it is part of a German code and conveys some important information. Mr. Philpotts at Stockholm discovered this trick.

On the Russian front a soldier was found with his jaw tied up, speechless and bleeding. A doctor tried to persuade him to take cover and get attention; but he shook his head, and signified by actions that he was unable to speak owing to his damaged jaw. The doctor shoved him into a dug-out, and said kindly, “Just let me have a look at you.” On stripping the bandages off there was no wound at all, and the German in Russian uniform was given a cigarette and shot through the head.

In Flanders we used to see companies of spies led out to be shot—first a party of soldiers, then the spies, after them the burying-party, and then the firing-party—marching stolidly to some place of execution.

How awful shell-fire must be for those who really can't stand it! I heard of a Colonel the other day—a man who rode to hounds, and seemed quite a sound sort of fellow—and when the first shell came over, he leapt from his horse and lay on the ground shrieking with fear, and with every shell that came over he yelled and screamed. He had to be sent home, of course. Some people say this sort of thing is purely physical. That is never my view of the matter.

[Page Heading: MISS CAVELL]

Miss Cavell's execution has stirred us all to the bottom of our hearts. The mean trickiness of her trial, the refusal to let facts be known, and then the cold-blooded murder of a brave English woman at 2 a.m. on a Sunday morning in a prison yard!

It is too awful to think about. She was not even technically a spy, but had merely assisted some soldiers to get away because she thought they were going to be shot. A rumour reached the American and Spanish Legations that she had been condemned and was to be shot at once, and they instantly rang up on the telephone to know if this was true. They were informed by the Military Court which had tried and condemned her that the verdict would not be pronounced till three days later. But the two Legations, still not satisfied, protested that they must be allowed to visit the prisoner. This was refused.

The English chaplain was at last permitted to enter the prison, and he saw Miss Cavell, and gave her the Sacrament. She said she was happy to die for her country. They led her out into the prison yard to stand before a firing-party of soldiers, but on her way there she fainted, and an officer took out his revolver and shot her through the head.



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Petrograd! the stage of romance, and the subject of dazzling pictures, is one of the most commonplace towns I have ever been in. It has its one big street—the Nevski Prospect—where people walk and shop as they do in Oxford Street, and it has a few cathedrals and churches, which are not very wonderful. The roadways are a mass of slush and are seldom swept; and there are tramways, always crowded and hot, and many rickety little victorias with damp cushions, in which one goes everywhere. Even in the evening we go out in these; and the colds in the head which follow are chronic.

The English colony seems to me as provincial as the rest of Petrograd. The town and its people disappoint me greatly. The Hotel Astoria is a would-be fashionable place, and there is a queer crowd of people listening to the band and eating, as surely only in Russia they can eat. It is all wrong in war-time, and I hate being one of the people here.

N.B.—Write “Miss Wilbraham” as soon as possible, and write it in gusts. Call one chapter “The Diners,” and try to convey the awful solemnity of meals—the grave young men with their goblets of brandy, in which they slowly rotate ice, the waiter who hands the bowl where the ice is thrown when the brandy is cool enough, and then the final gulp, with a nose inside the large goblet. Shade of Heliogabalus! If the human tummy must indeed be distended four times in twenty-four hours, need it be done so solemnly, and with such a pig-like love of the trough? If they would even eat what there is with joy one wouldn’t mind, but the talk about food, the once-enjoyed food, the favourite food, is really too tiresome. “Where to dine” becomes a sort of test of true worth. Grave young men give the names of four or five favoured places in London. Others, hailed and acknowledged as really good judges, name half-a-dozen more in Paris where they “do you well.” The real toff knows that Russia is the place to dine. We earnestly discuss blue-point oysters and caviare, which, if you “know the man,” you can get sent fresh on the Vienna Express from Moscow.

[Page Heading: BERNARD SHAW]

I once asked Bernard Shaw to dinner, and he replied on a postcard: “Never! I decline to sit in a hot room and eat dead animals, even with you to amuse me!”

I always seem to be sitting in hot rooms and eating dead animals, and then paying amazing high prices for them.

4 November.—I dined with the ——s the other night. Either the hot rooms, or the fact that I am anaemic at present, causes me to be so sleepy in the evenings that I dislike dining out. I sway with sleep even when people are talking to me. It was a middle-class little party, such as I often enjoy. One’s friends would fain only have one see a few fine blooms, but I love common flowers.



We have been to see “Peter’s little house.” There was a tiny shrine, crowded with people in wraps and shawls, who crossed themselves ceaselessly, to the danger of their neighbours’ faces, for so fervid were their gesticulations that their hands flew in every direction! They shoved with their elbows to get near the wax candles that dripped before the pictures of the black-faced Virgin and Child, who were “allowing” soldiers to be painfully slaughtered by the million.



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Ye gods, what a faith! What an acrobatic performance to try and reconcile a Father's personal care for His poor little sparrows and His indifference at seeing so many of them stretched bleeding on the ground!

Religion so far has been a success where martyrs are concerned, but we must go on with courage to something that teaches men to *live* for the best and the highest. This should come from ourselves, and lead up to God. It should not require teaching, or priests, or even prayer. Humanity is big enough for this. It should shake off cords and chains and old Bible stories of carnage and killing, and get to work to find a new, responsible, clean, sensible, practical scheme of life, in which each man will have to get away from silly old idols and step out by himself.

There is nothing very difficult about it, but we are so beset by bogies, and so full of fears and fancies that we are half the time either in a state of funk, or in its antithesis, a state of cheekiness. Schoolmaster-ridden, we are behaving still like silly children, and our highest endeavour is (school-boy-like) to resemble our fellows as nearly as possible. The result is stagnation, crippled forms, wasted energy, people waiting for years by some healing pool and longing for someone to dip them in. All the release that Christ preached to men is being smothered in something worse than Judaism. We love chains, and when they are removed we either turn and put them on again, or else caper like mad things because we have cast them off. Freedom is still as distant as the stars.

5 November.—Yesterday we lunched with the English chaplain, Mr. Lombard. He and I had a great talk walking home on a dark afternoon through the slush after we had been to call on the Maxwells. I think he is one of the “exiles” whom one meets all the world over, one of those who don't transplant well. I am one myself! And Mr. Lombard and I nearly wept when we found ourselves in a street that recalled the Marylebone Road. We pretended we were in sight of Euston Station, and talked of taking a Baker Street bus till our voices grew choky.

How absurd we islanders are! London is a poky place, but we adore it. St. James's Street is about the length of a good big ship, yet we don't feel we have lived till we get back to it! And as for Piccadilly and St. Paul's, well, we see them in our dreams.

Our little unit has not found work yet. I was told before I joined it that it had been accepted by the Russian Red Cross Society.

[Page Heading: “CHARITY” AND WAR]

I have been hearing many things out here, and thinking many things. There is only one way of directing Red Cross work. Everything should be—and must be in future—put under military authority and used by military authority. “Charity” and war should be separate. It is absurd that the Belgians in England should be housed and fed by a Government grant, and our own soldiers are dependent on private charity for the very



socks they wear and the cigarettes they smoke. Aeroplanes had to be instituted and prizes offered for them by a newspaper, and ammunition wasn't provided till a newspaper took up the matter. To be mob-ridden is bad enough, but to be press-ridden is worse!



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Now, war is a military matter, and should be controlled by military authorities. Mrs. Wynne, Mr. Bevan, and I should not be out here waiting for work. We ought to be sent where we are needed, and so ought all Red Cross people. This would put an end, one hopes, to the horrid business of getting "soft jobs."

7 November.—Whenever I am away from England I rejoice in the passing of each week that brings me nearer to my return. I had hardly realised to-day was the 7th, but I am thankful I am one week nearer the grey little island and all the nice people in it.

Yesterday I went to Lady Georgina Buchanan's soup-kitchen, and helped to feed Polish refugees. They strike me as being very like animals, but not so interesting. In the barracks where they lodge everyone crowds in. There is no division of the sexes, babies are yelling, and families are sleeping on wooden boards. The places are heated but not aired, and the smell is horrid; but they seem to revel in "frowst." All the women are dandling babies or trying to cook things on little oil-stoves. At night-time things are awful, I believe, and the British Ambassador has been asked to protect the girls who are there.

8 November.—This afternoon I went to see Mrs. Bray, and then I had an unexpected pleasure, for I met Johnnie Parsons, who is Naval Attache to Admiral Phillimore, and we had a long chat. When one is in a strange land, or with people who know one but little, these encounters are wonderfully nice.

The other night I dined with the Heron Maxwells, and had a nice evening and a game of bridge. Some Americans, called de Velter, were there. I think most people from the States regret the neutrality of their country.

[Page Heading: VISIONS OF PEACE]

Everyone brings in different stories of the war. Some say Germany is exhausted and beaten, others say she is flushed with victory, and with enormous reserves of men, food, and ammunition. I try to believe all the good I hear, and when even children or fools tell me the war will soon be over, I want to embrace them—I don't care whether they are talking nonsense or not. Sometimes I seem to see a great hushed cathedral, and ourselves returning thanks for Peace and Victory, and the vision is too much for me. I must either work or be chloroformed till that time comes.

9 November.—I think there is only one thing I dislike more than sitting in an hotel bedroom and learning a new language, and that is sitting in an hotel bedroom and nursing a cold in my head. Lately I have been learning Russian—and now I am sniffing. My own fault. I would sleep with my window open in this unhealthiest of cities, and smells and marsh produced a feverish cold.



Out in the square the soldiers drill all the time in the snow, lying in it, standing in it, and dressed for the most part in cotton clothing. Wool can't be bought, so a close cotton web is made, with the inside teased out like flannelette, and this is all they have. The necessaries of life are being "cornered" right and left, mostly by the commercial houses and the banks. The other day 163 railway trucks of sugar were discovered in a siding, where the owners had placed it to wait for a rise. Meanwhile, sugar has been almost unprocurable.



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Everyone from the front describes the condition of the refugees as being most wretched. They are camping in the snow by the thousand, and are still tramping from Poland.

And here we are in the Astoria Hotel, and there is one pane of glass between us and the weather; one pane of glass between us and the peasants of Poland; one pane of glass dividing us from poverty, and keeping us in the horrid atmosphere of this place, with its evil women and its squeaky band! How I hate money!

I hope soon to join a train going to Dvinsk with food and supplies.

13 November.—I have felt very brainless since I came here. It is the result, I believe, of the Petrograd climate. Nearly everyone feels it. I had a little book in my head which I thought I could “dash off,” and that writing it would fill up these waiting days, but I can’t write a word.

The war news is not good, but the more territory that Germany takes, the more the British rub their hands and cry victory. Their courage and optimism are wonderful.

To-day I spent with the Maxwells, and met a nurse, newly returned from Galicia, who had interesting tales to tell. One about some Russian airmen touched me. There had been a fierce fight overhead, when suddenly the German aeroplane began to wheel round and round like a leaf, when it was found that the machine was on fire. One of the airmen had been shot and the other burnt to death. The Russians refused to come and look at the remains even of the aeroplane, and said sadly, “All we men of the air are brothers.” They gave the dead Germans a military funeral, and then sailed over the enemy’s lines to drop a note to say that all honour had been done to the brave dead.

[Page Heading: BULGARIA]

I met Monsieur Jecquier, who was full of the political situation—said Bulgaria would have joined us any day if we had promised to give her Bukowina; and blamed Bark, the Russian Finance Minister, for the terms of England’s loan (the loan is for thirty millions, and repayment is promised in a year, which is manifestly impossible, and the situation may be strained). He said also that Motono, the Japanese Ambassador, is far the finest politician here; and he told me that while Russia ought to have been protecting the road to Constantinople she was quarrelling about what its new name was to be, and had decided to call it “Czareska.” Now, I suppose, the Germans are already there. Lloyds has been giving L100 at a premium of L5 that King Ferdinand won’t be on his throne next June. The premium has gone to L10, which is good news. If Ferdie is assassinated the world will be rid of an evil fellow who has played a mean and degraded part in this war.

We dined at the British Embassy last night. I was taken in to dinner by Mr. George Lloyd, who was full of interesting news. I had a nice chat with Lady Georgina.

20 November.—It has been rather a “hang-on” ever since I wrote last, nothing settled and nothing to do. No one ever seems at their best in Petrograd. It is a cross place and a common place. I never understood Tolstoi till I came here. On all sides one sees the same insane love of money and love of food.



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A restaurant here disgusts me as nothing else ever did. From a menu a foot long no one seems able to choose a meal, but something fresh must be ordered. The prices are quite silly, and, oddly enough, people seem to revel in them. They still eat caviare at ten shillings a head; the larger the bill the better they are pleased.

Joseph, the Napoleon of the restaurant, keeps an eye on everyone. He is yellow, and pigeon-breasted, but his voice is like grease, and he speaks caressingly of food, pencils entries in his pocket-book, and stimulates jaded appetites by signalling the “voiture aux hors d’oeuvres” to approach. The rooms are far too hot for anyone to feel hungry, the band plays, and the leader of it grins all the time, and capers about on his little platform like a monkey on an organ.

Always in this life of restaurants and gilt and roubles I am reminded of the fact that the only authentic picture we have of hell is of a man there who all his life had eaten good dinners.

[Page Heading: STAGNATION]

I have been busy seeing all manner of people in order to try and get work to do. I hear of suffering, but I am never able to locate it or to do anything for it. No distinct information is forthcoming; and when I go to one high official he gives me his card and sends me to another. Nothing is even decided about Mrs. Wynne’s cars, although she is offering a gift worth some thousands of pounds. I go to Lady Georgina’s work-party on Mondays and meet the English colony, and on Wednesdays and Saturdays I distribute soup; but it is an unsatisfactory business, and the days go by and one gets nothing done. One isn’t even storing up health, because this is rather an unhealthy place, so altogether we are feeling a bit low. I can never again be surprised at Russian “laissez faire,” or want of push and energy. It is all the result of the place itself. I feel in a dream, and wish with all my heart I could wake up in my own bed.

21 November.—Sunday, and I have slept late. At home I begin work at 6 a.m. Here, like everyone else, I only wake up at night, and the “best hours of the day,” as we call them, are wasted, a la Watts’ hymn, in slumber. If it was possible one would organise one’s time a bit, but hotel life is the very mischief for that sort of thing. There are no facilities for anything. One must telephone in Russian or spend roubles on messengers if one wants to get into touch with anyone. I took a taxi out to lunch one day. It cost 16 roubles—*i.e.*, 32s.

Dear old Lord Radstock used to say in the spring, “The Lord is calling me to Italy,” and a testy parson once remarked, “The Lord always calls you at very convenient times, Radstock.” I don’t feel as if the Lord had called me here at a very convenient time.

I called on Princess Helene Scherbatoff yesterday, and found her and her people at home. The mother runs a hospital-train for the wounded in the intervals of hunting



wolves. Her son has been dead for some months, and she says she hasn't had time to bury him yet! One assumes he is embalmed! Yet I can't help saying they were charming people to meet, so we must suppose they are somewhat cracked. The daughter is lovely, and they were all in deep mourning for the unburied relative.



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24 November.—This long wait is trying us a bit high. There is literally nothing to do. We arrange pathetic little programmes for ourselves. To-day I shall lunch with Mr. Cunard, and see the lace he has bought: yesterday I did some shopping with Captain Smith: one day I sew at Lady Georgina's work-party.

Heavens, what a life! I realise that for years I have not drawn rein, and I am sure I don't require holidays. Moses was a wise man, and he knew that one day in seven is rest enough for most humans. I always "keep the Sabbath," and it is all the rest I want. Even here I might write and get on with something, but there is something paralysing about the place, and my brain won't work. I can't even write a diary! Everyone is depressed and everyone longs to be out of Petrograd. To-day we hear that the Swedes have closed the Haparanda line, and Archangel is frozen, so here we are.

Now I have got to work at the hospital. There are 25,000 amputation cases in Petrograd. The men at my hospital are mostly convalescent, but, of course, their wounds require dressing. This is never done in their beds, as the English plan is, but each man is carried in turn to the "salle des pansements," and is laid on an operating-table and has his fresh dressings put on, and is then carried back to bed again. It is a good plan, I think. The hospital keeps me busy all the morning. Once more I begin to see severed limbs and gashed flesh, and the old question arises, "Why, what evil hath he done?" This war is the crucifixion of the youth of the world.

[Page Heading: "SPEAKING ONE'S MIND"]

In a way I am learning something here. For instance, I have always disliked "explanations" and "speaking one's mind," *etc., etc.*, more than I can say. I dare say I have chosen the path of least resistance in these matters. Here one must speak out sometimes, and speak firmly. It isn't all "being pleasant." One girl has been consistently rude to me. To-day, poor soul, I gave her a second sermon on our way back from church; but, indeed she has numerous opportunities in this war, and she is wasting them all on gossip, and prejudices, and petty jealousies. So we had a straight talk, and I hope she didn't hate it. At any rate, she has promised amendment of life. One hears of men that "this war gives them a chance to distinguish themselves." Women ought to distinguish themselves, too.

"Hesper! Venus! were we native to their splendour, or in Mars,
We should see this world we live in, fairest of their evening stars.
Who could dream of wars and tumults, hate and envy, sin and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that spot of peaceful light?
Might we not, in looking heavenward on a star so silver fair,
Yearn and clasp our hands and murmur, 'Would to God that
we were there!'"



Always when I see war, and boys with their poor dead faces turned up to the sky, and their hands so small in death, and when I see wounded men, and hear of soldiers going out of the trenches with a laugh and a joke to cut wire entanglements, knowing they will not come back, then I am ashamed of meanness and petty spite. So my poor young woman got a "fair dose of it" this morning, and when she had gulped once or twice I think she felt better.



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Yesterday one saw enough to stir one profoundly, and enough to make small things seem small indeed! It was a fine day at last, after weeks of black weather and skies heavy with snow, and although the cold was intense the sun was shining. I got into one of the horrid little droshkys, in which one sits on very damp cushions, and an “izvoztchik” in a heavy coat takes one to the wrong address always!

The weather has been so thick, the rain and snow so constant, that I had not yet seen Petrograd. Yesterday, out of the mists appeared golden spires, and beyond the Neva, all sullen and heavy with ice, I saw towers and domes which I hadn't seen before. I stamped my feet on the shaky little carriage and begged the izvoztchik to drive a little quicker. We had to be at the Finnish station at 10 a.m., and my horse, with a long tail that embraced the reins every time that the driver urged speed, seemed incapable of doing more than potter over the frozen roads. I picked up *Mme. Takmakoff*, who was taking me to the station, and we went on together.

[Page Heading: BLIND]

At the station there was a long wooden building and, outside, a platform, all frozen and white, where we waited for the train to come in. *Mme. Sazonoff*, a fine well-bred woman, the wife of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was there, and “many others,” as the press notices say. The train was late. We went inside the long wooden building to shelter from the bitter cold beside the hot-water pipes, and as we waited we heard that the train was coming in. It came slowly and carefully alongside the platform with its crunching snow, almost with the creeping movement of a woman who carries something tenderly. Then it stopped. Its windows were frozen and dark, so that one could see nothing. I heard a voice behind me say, “The blind are coming first,” and from the train there came groping one by one young men with their eyes shot out. They felt for the step of the train, and waited bewildered till someone came to lead them; then, with their sightless eyes looking upwards more than ours do, they moved stumbling along. Poor fellows, they'll never see home; but they turned with smiles of delight when the band, in its grey uniforms and fur caps, began to play the National Anthem.

These were the first wounded prisoners from Germany, sent home because they could never fight again—quite useless men, too sorely hurt to stand once more under raining bullets and hurtling shell-fire—so back they came, and like dazed creatures they got out of the train, carrying their little bundles, limping, groping, but home.

After the blind came those who had lost limbs—one-legged men, men still in bandages, men hobbling with sticks or with an arm round a comrade's neck, and then the stretcher cases. There was one man carrying his crutches like a cross. Others lay twisted sideways. Some never moved their heads from their pillows. All seemed to me to have about them a splendid dignity which made the long, battered, suffering company into some great pageant. I have never seen men so lean as they were. I have never seen men's cheek-bones seem to cut through the flesh just where the close-cropped hair on

their temples ends. I had never seen such hollow eyes; but they were Russian soldiers, Russian gentlemen, and they were home again!



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In the great hall we greeted them with tables laid with food, and spread with wine and little presents beside each place. They know how to do this, the princely Russians, so each man got a welcome to make him proud. The band was there, and the long tables, the hot soup and the cigarettes. All the men had washed at Torneo, and all of them wore clean cotton waistcoats. Their hair was cut, too, but their faces hadn't recovered. One knew they would never be young again. The Germans had done their work. Semi-starvation and wounds had made old men of these poor Russian soldiers. All was done that could be done to welcome them back, but no one could take it in for a time. A sister in black distributed some little Testaments, each with a cross on it, and the soldiers kissed the symbol of suffering passionately.

They filed into their places at the tables, and the stretchers were placed in a row two deep up the whole length of the room. In the middle of it stood an altar, covered with silver tinsel, and two priests in tinsel and gold stood beside it. Upon it was the sacred ikon, and the everlasting Mother and Child smiled down at the men laid in helplessness and weakness at their feet.

A General welcomed the soldiers back; and when they were thanked in the name of the Emperor for what they had done, the tears coursed down their thin cheeks. It was too pitiful and touching to be borne. I remember thinking how quietly and sweetly a sister of mercy went from one group of soldiers to another, silently giving them handkerchiefs to dry their tears. We are all mothers now, and our sons are so helpless, so much in need of us.

[Page Heading: WOUNDED RUSSIANS]

Down the middle of the room were low tables for the men who lay down all the time. They saluted the ikon, as all the soldiers did, and some service began which I was unable to follow. I can't tell what the soldiers said, or of what they were thinking. About their comrades they said to *Mme. Takmakoff* that 25,000 of them had died in two days from neglect. We shall never hear the worst perhaps.

There were three officers at a table. One of them was shot through the throat, and was bandaged. I saw him put all his food on one side, unable to swallow it. Then a high official came and sat down and drank his health. The officer raised his glass gallantly, and put his lips to the wine, but his throat was shot through, he made a face of agony, bowed to the great man opposite, and put down his glass.

Some surgeons in white began to go about, taking names and particulars of the men's condition. Everyone was kind to the returned soldiers, but they had borne too much. Some day they will smile perhaps, but yesterday they were silent men returned from the dead, and not yet certain that their feet touched Russia again.

CHAPTER II

WAITING FOR WORK



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We paid our heavy bills and left Petrograd on Monday, the 29th November. Great fuss at the station, as our luggage and the guide had disappeared together. A comfortable, slow journey, and Colonel Malcolm met us at Moscow station and took us to the Hotel de Luxe—a shocking bad pub, but the only one where we could get rooms. We went out to lunch, and I had a plate of soup, two faens (little wheat cakes), and the fifth part of a bottle of Graves. This modest repast cost sixteen shillings per head. We turned out of the Luxe Hotel the following day, and came to the National, where four hundred people were waiting to get in. But our guide Grundy had influence, and managed to get us rooms. It is quite comfortable.

None of us was sorry to leave Petrograd, and that is putting the case mildly. People there are very depressed, and it was a case of “she said” and “he said” all the time. Everyone was trying to snuff everyone else out. “I don’t know them”—and the lips pursed up finished many a reputation, and I heard more about money and position than I ever heard in my life before. “Bunty” and I used to say that the world was inhabited by “nice people and very nice people,” and once she added a third class, “fearfully nice people.” That is a world one used to inhabit. I suppose one must make the best of this one!

[Page Heading: MOSCOW]

Moscow. 2 December.—Hilda Wynne was rather feverish to-day, and lay in bed, so I had a solitary walk about the Kremlin, and saw a fine view from its splendid position. But, somehow, I am getting tired of solitude. I suppose the war gives us the feeling that we must hold together, and yet I have never been more alone than during this last eighteen months.

* * * * *

To Miss Macnaughtan's Sisters.

CREDIT LYONNAIS, MOSCOW,
3 December.

MY DEARS,

I have just heard that there is a man going up to Petrograd to-night who will put our letters in the Embassy bag, so there is some hope of this reaching you. It is really my Christmas letter to you all, so may it be passed round, please, although there won't be much in it.

We are now at Moscow, *en route* for the Caucasus *via* Tiflis, and our base will probably be Julfa. We have been chosen to go there by the Grand Duchess Cyril, but the reports about the roads are so conflicting that we are going to see for ourselves. When we get



there it will be difficult to send letters home, but the banks will always be in communication with each other, so I shall get all you send to Credit Lyonnais, Petrograd.

So far we have been waiting for our cars all this time. They had to come by Archangel, and they left long before we did, but they have not arrived yet. There are six ambulance cars, on board three different ships (for safety), and no news of any of them yet.

Now, at least, we have got a move on, and, barring accidents, we shall be in Tiflis next week. It's rather a fearsome journey, as the train only takes us to the foot of the mountains in four days, and then we must ride or drive across the passes, which they say are too cold for anything. You must imagine us like Napoleon in the "Retreat from Moscow" picture.



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Petrograd is a singularly unpleasant town, where the sun never shines, and it rains or snows every day. The river is full of ice, but it looks sullen and sad in the perpetual mist. There are a good many English people there; but one is supposed to know the Russians, which means speaking French all the time. Moscow is a far superior place, and is really most interesting and beautiful, and very Eastern, while Petrograd might be Liverpool. I filled up my time there in the hospital and soup-kitchen.

The price of everything gets worse, I do believe! Even a glass of filtered water costs one shilling and threepence! I have just left an hotel for which my bill was L3 for one night, and I was sick nearly all the time!

[Page Heading: "WHEN WILL THE WAR END?"]

Now, my dears, I wish you all the best Christmas you can have this year. I am just longing for news of you, but I never knew such a cut-off place as this for letters. Tell me about every one of the family. Write lengthy letters. When do people say the war will end?

Your loving
SARAH BROOM.

* * * * *

Tiflis. 12 December.—It is evening, and I have only just remembered it is Sunday, a thing I can't recollect ever having happened before. I have been ill in my room all day, which no doubt accounts for it.

We stayed at Moscow for a few days, and my recollection of it is of a great deal of snow and frequent shopping expeditions in cold little sleighs. I liked the place, and it was infinitely preferable to Petrograd. Mr. Cazalet took us to the theatre one night, and there was rather a good ballet. These poor dancers! They, like others, have lost their nearest and dearest in the war, but they still have to dance. Of course they call themselves "The Allies," and one saw rather a stale ballet-girl in very sketchy clothes dancing with a red, yellow, and black flag draped across her. Poor Belgium! It was such a travesty of her sufferings.

Mr. Cazalet came to see us off at the station, and we began our long journey to Tiflis, but we changed our minds, and took the local train from ——— to Vladikavkas, where we stayed one night rather enjoyably at a smelly hotel, and the following day we got a motor-car and started at 7 a.m. for the pass. The drive did us all good. The great snow peaks were so unlike Petrograd and gossip! I had been rather ill on the train, and I got worse at the hotel and during the drive, so I was quite a poor Sarah when I reached Tiflis. Still, the scenery had been lovely all the time, and we had funny little meals at rest houses.



When we got to Tiflis I went on being seedy for a while. I finished Stephen Graham's book on Russia which he gave me before I left home. It is charmingly written. The line he chooses is mine also, but his is a more important book than mine.

Batoum. 22 December.—We have had a really delightful time since I last wrote up the old diary! (A dull book so far.) We saw a good many important people at Tiflis—Gorlebeff, the head of the Russian Red Cross, Prince Orloff, Prince Galitzin (a charming man), General Bernoff, *etc.*, *etc.*



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Mrs. Wynne's and Mr. Bevan's cars are definitely accepted for the Tehran district. My own plans are not yet settled, but I hope they may be soon. People seem to think I look so delicate that they are a little bit afraid of giving me hard work, and yet I suppose there are not many women who get through more work than I do; but I believe I am looking rather a poor specimen, and my hair has fallen out. I think I am rather like those pictures on the covers of "appeals"—pictures of small children, underneath which is written, "This is Johnny Smith, or Eliza Jones, who was found in a cellar by one of our officers; weight—age—etc., etc."

If I could have a small hospital north of Tehran it would be a good centre for the wounded, and it would also be a good place for the others to come to. Mr. Hills and Dr. Gordon (American missionaries) seem to think they would like me to join them in their work for the Armenians. These unfortunate people have been nearly exterminated by massacres, and it has been officially stated that 75 per cent. of the whole race has been put to the sword. This sounds awful enough, but when we consider that there is no refinement of torture that has not been practised upon them, then something within one gets up and shouts for revenge.

The photographs which General Bernoff has are proof of the devildom of the Turks, only that the devil could not have been so beastly, and a beast could not have been so devilish. The Kaiser has convinced the Turks that he is now converted from Christianity to Mahomedanism. In every mosque he is prayed for under the title of "Hajed Mahomet Wilhelm," and photographs of burned and ruined cathedrals in France and Belgium are displayed to prove that he is now anti-Christian. Heaven knows it doesn't want much proving!

[Page Heading: RASPUTIN]

There are rumours of peace offers from Germany, but we must go on fighting now, if only for the sake of the soldiers, who will be the ones to suffer, but who *can't* be asked to give in. The Russians are terribly out of spirits, and very depressed about the war. The German influence at Court scares them, and there is, besides, the mysterious Rasputin to contend with! This extraordinary man seems to exercise a malign influence over everyone, and people are powerless to resist him. Nothing seems too strange or too mad to recount of this man and his dupes. He is by birth a moujik, or peasant, and is illiterate, a drunkard, and an immoral wretch. Yet there is hardly a great lady at Court who has not come under his influence, and he is supposed by this set of persons to be a reincarnation of Christ. Rasputin's figure is one of those mysterious ones round which every sort of rumour gathers.



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We left Tiflis on Friday, 17th December, and had rather a panic at the station, as our passports had been left at the hotel, and our tickets had gone off to Baku. However, the unpunctuality of the train helped us, and we got off all right, an hour late. The train was about a thousand years old, and went at the rate of ten miles an hour, and we could only get second-class ordinary carriages to sleep in! But morning showed us such lovely scenery that nothing else mattered. One found oneself in a semi-tropical country, with soft skies and blue sea, and palms and flowers, and with tea-gardens on all the hillsides. When will people discover Caucasia? It is one of the countries of the world.

We had letters to Count Groholski, a most charming young fellow, who arranged a delightful journey for us into the mountains, and as we had brought no riding things we began to search the small shops for riding-boots and the like. Then, in the evening we dined with Count Oulieheff, and had an interesting pleasant time. Two Japanese were at dinner, and, although they couldn't speak any tongue but their own, Japanese always manage to look interesting. No doubt much of that depends upon being able to say nothing.

[Page Heading: GEORGIA]

Early next day we motored out to the Count's Red Cross camp at ——. Here everyone was sleeping under tents or in little wooden huts, and we met some good-mannered, nice soldier men, most of them Poles. The scenery was grand, and we were actually in the little known and wonderful old kingdom of Georgia. Very little of it is left. There are ruins all along the river of castles and fortresses and old stone bridges now crumbling into decay, but of the country, once so proud, only one small dirty city remains, and that is Artvin, on the mountain-side. It was too full of an infectious sort of typhus for us to go there, but we drove out to the hospital on the opposite side of the valley, and the doctor in charge there gave us beds for the night.

On Sunday, December 19th, I wandered about the hillside, found some well-made trenches, and saw some houses which had been shelled. The Turks were in possession of Artvin only a year ago, and there was a lot of fighting in the mountains. It seems to me that the population of the place is pretty Turkish still; and there are Turkish houses with small Moorish doorways, and little windows looking out on the glorious view. In all the mountains round here the shooting is fine, and consists of toor (goats), leopards, bears, wolves, and on the Persian front, tigers also. Land can be had for nothing if one is a Russian.

On Sunday afternoon we drove in a most painful little carriage to a village which seemed to be inhabited by good-looking cut-throats, but there was not much to see except the picturesque, smelly, old brown houses. We met a handsome Cossack carrying a man down to the military hospital. He was holding him upright, as children carry each other; the man was moaning with fever, and had been stricken with the virulent typhus, which nearly always kills. But what did the handsome Cossack care



about infection? He was a mountaineer, and had eyes with a little flame in them, and a fierce moustache. Perhaps to-morrow he will be gone. People die like flies in these unhealthy towns, and the Russians are supremely careless.



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We went back to the hospital for dinner, and then went out into crisp, beautiful moonlight, and motored back to the Red Cross camp. I had a little hut to sleep in, which had just been built. It contained a bed and two chairs, upon one of which was a tin basin! The cold in the morning was about as sharp as anything I have known, but everyone was jolly and pleasant, and we had a charming time.

The Count told us of the old proud Georgians when there was a famine in the country and a Russian Governor came to offer relief to the starving inhabitants. Their great men went out to receive him, and said courteously, "We have not been here, Gracious One, one hundred or two hundred years, but much more than a thousand years, and during that time we have not had a visit from the Russian Government. We are pleased to see you, and the honour you have done us is sufficient in itself—for the rest we think we will not require anything at your hands."

On Monday I motored with the others out to the ferry; then I had to leave them, as they were going to ride forty miles, and that was thought too much for me. Age has *no* compensations, and it is not much use fighting it. One only ends by being "a wonderful old woman of eighty": reminiscent, perhaps a little obstinate, and in the world to come—always eighty?

Came back to Batoum with Count Stanislas Constant, and went for a drive with him to see the tea-gardens.

* * * * *

[Page Heading: TIFLIS]

Christmas Eve at Tiflis, and here we are with cars still stuck in the ice thirty miles from Archangel, and ourselves just holding on and trying not to worry. But what a waste of time! Also, fighting is going on now in Persia, and we might be a lot of use. We came back from Batoum in the hottest and slowest train I have ever been in. Still, Georgia delighted me, and I am glad to have seen it. They have a curious custom there (the result of generations of fighting). Instead of saying "Good-morning," they say "Victory"; and the answer is, "May the victory be yours." The language is Georgian, of course; and then there is Tartar, and Polish, and Russian, and I can't help thinking that the Tower of Babel was the poorest joke that was ever played on mankind. Nothing stops work so completely.

What will Christmas Day be like at home? I think of all the village churches, with the holly and evergreens, and in almost every one the little new brass plates to the memory of beautiful youth, dead and mangled, and left in the mud to await another trumpet than that which called it from the trenches. There is nothing like a boy, and all the life of England and the prayers of mothers have centred round them. One's older friends died first, and now the boys are falling, and from every little vicarage, from school-houses



and colleges, the endless stream goes, all with their heads up, fussing over their little bits of packing, and then away to stand exploding shells and gas and bombs. No one except those who have seen knows the ghastly tale of human suffering that this war involves every day. Down here 550,000 Armenians have been butchered in cold blood. The women are either massacred or driven into Turkish harems.



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Yesterday we heard some news at last in this most benighted corner of the world! England has raised four million volunteers. Hurrah! Over one million men volunteered in one week. French takes command at home and Haig at the front.

* * * * *

To Mrs. Charles Young.

HOTEL ORIENT, TIFLIS,
26 December.

DARLING J.,

It seems almost useless to write letters, or even to wire! Letters sometimes take forty-nine days to get to England, and telegrams are *always* kept a fortnight before being sent. We have had great difficulty about the ambulance cars, as they all got frozen into the river at Archangel; however, as you will see from the newspapers, there isn't a great deal going on yet.

I do hope you and all the family are safe and sound. I wired to —— for her birthday to ask news of you all, and I prepaid the reply, but, of course, none came, so I am sure she never got the wire. I have wired twice to ——, but no reply. At last one gives up expecting any. I got some newspapers nearly a month old to-day, and I have been devouring them.

This is rather a curious place, and the climate is quite good; no snow, and a good deal of pleasant sun, but the hills all round are very bare and rugged.

I have had a cough, which I think equals your best efforts in that line. How it does shake one up! I had some queer travelling when it was at its worst: for the first night we were given a shakedown in a little mountain hospital, which was fearfully cold; and the next night I was put into a newly-built little place, made of planks roughly nailed together, and with just a bed and a basin in it.

The cold was wonderful, and since then—as you may imagine—the Macnaughtan cough has been heard in the land!

[Page Heading: GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS]

Yesterday (Christmas Day) we were invited to breakfast with the Grand Duke Nicholas. A Court function in Russia is the most royal that you can imagine—no half measures about it! The Grand Duke is an adorably handsome man, quite extraordinarily and obviously a Grand Duke. He measures 6 feet 5 inches, and is worshipped by every soldier in the Army.



We went first into a huge anteroom, where a lady-in-waiting received us, and presented us to “Son Altesse Imperiale,” and then to the Grand Duke and to his brother, the Grand Duke Peter. Some scenes seem to move as in a play. I had a vision of a great polished floor, and many tall men in Cossack dress, with daggers and swords, most of them different grades of Princes and Imperial Highnesses.

A great party of Generals, and ladies, and members of the Household, then went into a big dining-room, where every imaginable hors d’oeuvre was laid out on dishes—dozens of different kinds—and we each ate caviare or something. Afterwards, with a great tramp and clank of spurs and swords, everyone moved on to a larger dining-room, where there were a lot of servants, who waited excellently.



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In the middle of the dejeuner the Grand Duke Nicholas got up, and everyone else did the same, and they toasted us! The Grand Duke made a speech about our "gallantry," *etc., etc.*, and everyone raised glasses and bowed to one. Nothing in a play could have been more of a real fine sort of scene. And certainly S. Macnaughtan in her wildest dreams hadn't thought of anything so wonderful as being toasted in Russia by the Imperial Staff.

It's quite a thing to be tiresome about when one grows old!

In the evening we tried to be merry, and failed. The Grand Duchess sent us mistletoe and plum-pudding by the hand of M. Boulderoff. He took us shopping, but the bazaars are not interesting.

Good-bye, and bless you, my dear,
Yours as ever,
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

* * * * *

To Miss Julia Keays-Young.

HOTEL D'ORIENT, TIFLIS,
CAUCASUS, RUSSIA,
27 December.

DARLING JENNY,

I can't tell you what a pleasure your letters are. I only wish I could get some more from anybody, but not a line gets through! I want so much to hear about Bet and her marriage, and to know if the nephews and Charles are safe.

There seems to be the usual winter pause over the greater part of the war area, but round about here, there are the most awful massacres; 550,000 Armenians have been slaughtered in cold blood by the Turks, and with cruelties that pass all telling. One is quite impotent.

I expect to be sent into Persia soon, and meanwhile I hope to join some American missionaries who are helping the refugees. Our ambulances are at last out of the ice at Archangel, and will be here in a fortnight; but we are not to go to Persia for a month. "The Front" is always altering, and we never have any idea where our work will be wanted.

[Page Heading: HOMESICK]



We are still asking when the war will end, but, of course, no one knows. One gets pretty homesick out here at times, and there was a chance I might have to go back to England for equipment, but that seems off at present.

Your always loving
A. S.

* * * * *

29 December.—I have still got a horrid bad cough, and my big, dull room is depressing. We are all depressed, I am afraid. Being accustomed to have plenty to do, this long wait is maddening.

Whatever Russia may have in store for us in the way of useful work, nothing can exceed the boredom of our first seven weeks here. We are just spoiling for work. I believe it is as bad as an illness to feel like this, and we won't be normal again for some time. Oddly enough, it does affect one's health, and Hilda Wynne and I are both seedy. We are always trying to wire for things, but not a word gets through.

We were summoned to dine at the palace last night. Everyone very charming.

31 December.—Prince Murat came to dine and play bridge. Count Groholski turned up for a few days. My doctor vetted me for my cold. Business done—none. No sailor ever longed for port as I do for home.



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CHAPTER III

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF TIFLIS AND ARMENIA

Tiflis. 1 January, 1916.—Kind wishes from the Grand Duke and everybody. Not such an aimless day as usual. I got into a new sitting-room and put it straight, and in the evening we went to Prince Orloff's box for a performance of "Carmen." It was very Russian and wealthy. At the back of the box were two anterooms, where we sat and talked between the acts, and where tea, chocolates, *etc.*, were served. They say the Prince has £200,000 a year. He is gigantically fat, with a real Cossack face.

Scandal is so rife here that it hardly seems to mean scandal. They don't appear to be so much immoral as non-moral. Everyone sits up late; then most of them, I am told, get drunk, and then the evening orgies begin. No one is ostracised, everyone is called upon and "known" whatever they have done. I suppose English respectability would simply make them smile—if, indeed, they believed in it.

2 January.—I don't suppose I shall ever write an article on war charities, but I believe I ought to. A good many facts about them have come my way, and I consider that the public at home should be told how the finances are being administered.

I know of one hospital in Russia which has, I believe, cost England £100,000. The staff consists of nurses and doctors, dressers, *etc.*, all fully paid. The expenses of those in charge of it are met out of the funds. They live in good hotels, and have "entertaining allowances" for entertaining their friends, and yet one of them herself volunteered the information that the hospital is not required. The staff arrived weeks ago, but not the stores. Probably the building won't be opened for some time to come, and when it is opened there will be difficulty in getting patients to fill it.

In many parts of Russia hospitals are *not* wanted. In Petrograd there are five hundred of them run by Russians alone.

Then there is a fund for relief of the Poles, which is administered by Princess ——. The ambulance-car which the fund possesses is used by the Princess to take her to the theatre every night.

A great deal of money has been subscribed for the benefit of the Armenians. Who knows how much this has cost the givers? yet the distribution of this large sum seems to be conducted on most haphazard lines. An open letter arrived the other day for the Mayor of Tiflis. There is no Mayor of Tiflis, so the letter was brought to Major ——. It said: "Have you received two cheques already sent? We have had no acknowledgment." There seems to be no check on the expenditure, and there is no local organisation for dispensing the relief. I don't say that it is cheating: I only say as much as I know.



[Page Heading: ILL-BESTOWED CHARITY]

A number of motor-ambulances were sent to Russia by some generous people in England the other day. They were inspected by Royalty before being despatched, and arrived in the care of Mr. ——. When their engines were examined it was found that they were tied together with bits of copper-wire, and even with string. None of them could be made to go, and they were returned to England.



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We are desperately hard up at home just now, and we are denying ourselves in order to send these charitable contributions to the richest country in the world. Gorlebeff himself (head of the Russian Red Cross Society) has L30,000 a year. Armenians are literally rolling in money, and it is common to find Armenian ladies buying hats at 250 Rs. (L25) in Tiflis. The Poles are not ruined, nor do they seem to object to German rule, which is doing more for them than Russia ever did. Tiflis people are now sending money for relief to Mesopotamia. Of the 300,000 Rs. sent by England, 70,000 Rs. have stuck to someone's fingers.

In Flanders there were many people living in comfort such as they had probably never seen before, at the expense of the charitable public, and doing very little indeed all the time: cars to go about in, chauffeurs at their disposal, petrol without stint, and even their clothes (called uniforms for the nonce!) paid for.

And the little half-crowns that come in to run these shows, "how hardly they are earned sometimes! with what sacrifices they are given!" A man in Flanders said to me one day: "We could lie down and roll in tobacco, and we all help ourselves to every blooming thing we want; and here is a note I found in a poor little parcel of things to-night: 'We are so sorry not to be able to send more, but money is very scarce this week.'"

My own cousin brought four cars over to France, and he told me he was simply an unpaid chauffeur at the command of young officers coming in to shop at Dunkirk.

I am thankful to say that Mrs. Wynne and Mr. Bevan and I have paid our own expenses ever since the war began, and given things too. And I think a good many of our own corps in Flanders used to contribute liberally and pay for all they had. People here tell us that their cars have all been commandeered, and they are used for the wives of Generals, who never had entered one before, and who proudly do their shopping in them.

War must be a military matter, and these things must end, unless money is to find its way into the possession of the vultures who are always at hand when there is any carcass about.

5 January.—Absolutely nothing to write about. I saw Gorlebeff, Domerchekoff, and Count Tyszkiewicz of the Croix Rouge about my plans. They suggest my going to Urumiyah in Persia, where workers seem to be needed. The only other opening seems to be to go to Count Groholski's new little hospital on the top of the mountains. Mr. Hills, the American missionary, wants me first to go with him to see the Armenian refugees at Erivan, but we can't get transports for his gifts of clothing for them.

[Page Heading: A PRESENTIMENT]



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Before I left England I had a very strange, almost an overwhelming presentiment that I had better not come to Russia. I had by that time promised Mrs. Wynne that I would come, and I couldn't see that it would be the right thing to chuck her. I thought the work would suffer if I stayed at home, as she might find it impossible to get any other woman who would pay her own way and consent to be away for so long a time. Our prayers are always such childish things—prayer itself is only a cry—and I remember praying that if I was “meant to stay at home” some substitute might be found for me. This all seems too absurd when one views it in the light of what afterwards happened. My vision of “honour” and “work” seem for the moment ridiculous, and yet I know that I was not so foolish as I seem, for I got a written statement from Mr. Hume Williams (Mrs. Wynne's trustee), saying, “A unit has been formed, consisting of Mrs. Wynne, Miss Macnaughtan, etc., and it has been accepted by the Russian Red Cross.” The idea of being in Russia and having to look for work never in my wildest moments entered my head—and this is the end of the “vision,” I suppose.

Russian Christmas Day.—Took a car and went for a short run into the country. Weather fine and bright.

There is severe fighting in Galicia, and the rumour is that Urumiyah—the place to which I am going—has been evacuated.

My impression of Russia deepens—that it is run by beautiful women and rich men; and yet how charming everyone is to meet! Hardly anyone is uninteresting, and half the men are good-looking. The Cossack-dress is very handsome, and nearly everyone wears it. When the colour is dark red and the ornaments are of silver the effect is unusually good. They all walk well. One is amongst a primitive people, but a remarkably fine one!

10 January.—I am taking French lessons. This would appear to be a simple matter, even in Russia, but it has taken me three weeks to get a teacher. The first to come required a rest, and must decline; the second was recalled by an old employer; the third had too many engagements; the fourth came and then holidays began, as they always do! First our Christmas, then the Russian Christmas, then the Armenian Christmas, leading on to three New Year Days! After that the Baptism, with its holidays and its vigils.

There is only one sort of breakfast-roll in this hotel which is soft enough to eat; it is not made on festivals, nor on the day after a festival. I can honestly say we hardly ever see one.

With much fear and trembling I have bought a motor-car. No work seems possible without it. The price is heavy, but everyone says I shall be able to get it back when I leave. All the same I shake in my shoes—a chauffeur, tyres, petrol, mean money all the

time. One can't stop spending out here. It is like some fate from which one can't escape. Still the car is bought, and I suppose now I shall get work.



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[Page Heading: DIFFICULTIES]

We are all in the same boat. Mrs. Wynne has waited for her ambulances for three months, and I hear that even the Anglo-Russian hospital, with every name from Queen Alexandra's downwards on the list of its patrons, is in "one long difficulty." It is Russia, and nothing but Russia, that breaks us all. Everything is promised, nothing is done. The only *hope* of getting a move on is by bribery, and one may bribe the wrong people till one finds one's way about.

13 January.—The car took us up the Kajour road, and behaved well; but the chauffeur drove us into a bridge on the way down, and had to be dismissed. Tried to go to Erivan, but the new chauffeur mistook the road, so we had to return to Tiflis. N.B.—Another holiday was coming on, and he wanted to be at home. *I actually used to like difficulties!*

15 January.—Started again for Erivan. All went well, and we had a lovely drive till about 6 p.m. The dusk was gathering and we were up in the hills, when "bang!" went something, and nothing on earth would make the car move. We unscrewed nuts, we lighted matches, we got out the "jack," but we could not discover what was wrong. So where were we to spend the night?

In a fold of the grey hills was a little grey village—just a few huts belonging to Mahomedan shepherds, but there was nothing for it but to ask them for shelter. Fortunately, Dr. Wilson knew the language, and he persuaded the "head man" to turn out for us. His family consisted of about sixteen persons, all sleeping on the floor. They gave us the clay-daubed little place, and fortunately it contained a stove, but nothing else. The snow was all round us, but we made up the fire and got some tea, which we carried with us, and finally slept in the little place while the chauffeur guarded the car.

In the morning nothing would make the car budge an inch, and, seeing our difficulty, the Mahomedans made us pay a good deal for horses to tow the thing to the next village, where we heard there was a blacksmith. We followed in a hay-cart. We got to a Malokand settlement about 5 o'clock, and found ourselves in an extraordinarily pretty little village, and were given shelter in the very cleanest house I ever saw. The woman was a perfect treasure, and made us soup and gave us clean beds, and honey for breakfast. The chauffeur found that our shaft was broken, and the whole piece had to go back to Tiflis.

It was a real blow, our trip knocked on the head again, and now how were we to get on? The railway was 48 versts away, and the railway had to be reached. We hired one of those painful little carts, which are made of rough poles on wheels, and, clinging on by our eyelids, we drove as far as an Armenian village, where a snowstorm came on, and we took shelter with a "well-to-do" Armenian family, who gave us lunch and displayed their wool-work and were very friendly. From there we got into another "deelyjahns"



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of the painful variety, and jolted off for about 25 miles, till, as night fell, we struck the railway, and were given two wooden benches to sleep on in a small waiting-room. People came and went all night, and we slept with one eye open till 2 a.m., when the chauffeur took a train to Tiflis. We sat up till 6 a.m., when the train, two hours late, started for Erivan, where we arrived pretty well “cooked” at 11 p.m.

[Page Heading: ERIVAN]

Erivan. 20 January.—Last night’s experiences were certainly very “Russian.” We had wired for rooms, but although the message had been received nothing was prepared. The miserable rooms were an inch thick in dust, there were no fires, and no sheets on the beds! We went to a restaurant—fortunately no Russian goes to bed early—and found the queerest place, empty save for a band and a lady. The lady and the band were having supper. She, poor soul, was painted and dyed, but she offered her services to translate my French for me when the waiters could understand nothing but Russian. I was thankful to eat something and go to bed under my fur coat.

To-day we have been busy seeing the Armenian refugees. There are 17,000 of them in this city of 30,000 inhabitants. We went from one place to another, and always one saw the same things and heard the same tales.

Since the war broke out I think I have seen the actual breaking of the wave of anguish which has swept over the world (I often wonder if I can “feel” much more!). There was Dunkirk and its shambles, there was ruined Belgium, and there was, above all, the field hospital at Furnes, with its horrible courtyard, the burning heap of bandages, and the mattresses set on edge to drip the blood off them and then laid on some bed again. I can never forget it. I was helping a nurse once, and all the time I was sitting on a dead man and never knew it!

And now I am hearing of one million Armenians slaughtered in cold blood. The pitiful women in the shelters were saying, “We are safe because we are old and ugly; all the young ones went to the harems.” Nearly all the men were massacred. The surplus children and unwanted women were put into houses and burned alive. Everywhere one heard, “We were 4,000 in one village, and only 143 escaped;” “There were 30 of us, and now only a few children remain;” “All the men are killed.” These were things one saw for oneself, heard for oneself. There was nothing sensational in the way the women told their stories.

Russia does what she can in the way of “relief.” She gives 4-1/2 Rs. per month to each person. This gives them bread, and there might be fires, for stoves are there, but no one seems to have the gumption to put them up. Here and there men and women are sleeping on valuable rugs, which look strange in the bare shelters. Most of the women



knitted, and some wove on little “fegir” looms. The dullness of their existence matches the tragedy of it. The food is so plain that it doesn’t want cooking—being mostly bread and water; but sometimes a few rags are washed, and there is an attempt to try and keep warm. Yet I have heard an English officer say that nothing pleases a Russian more than to ask, “When is there to be another Armenian massacre?”



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The Armenians are hated. I wonder Christ doesn't do more for them considering they were the first nation in the world to embrace Christianity; but then, one wonders about so many things during this war. Oh, if we could stamp out the madness that seems to accompany religion, and just live sober, kind, sensible lives, how good it would be; but the Turks must burn women and children, alive, because, poor souls, they think one thing and the Turks think another! And men and women are hating and killing each other because Christ, says one, had a nature both human and divine, and, says another, the two were merged in one. And a third says that Christ was equal to the Father, while a whole Church separated itself on the question of Sabellianism, or "The Procession of the Son."

Poor Christ, once crucified, and now dismembered by your own disciples, are you glad you came to earth, or do you still think God forsook you, and did you, too, die an unbeliever? The crucifixion will never be understood until men know that its worst agony consisted in the disbelief which first of all doubts God and then must, by all reason, doubt itself. The resurrection comes when we discover that we are God and He is us.

[Page Heading: ETCHMIADZIN]

21 January.—To-day, I drove out to Etchmiadzin with Mr. Lazarienne, an Armenian, to see that curious little place. It is the ecclesiastical city of Armenia—its little Rome, where the Catholicus lives. He was ill, but a charming Bishop—Wardepett by name—with a flowing brown beard and long black silk hood, made us welcome and gave us lunch, and then showed us the hospital—which had no open windows, and smelt horrible—and the lovely little third-century "temple." Then he took us round the strange, quiet little place, with its peaceful park and its three old brown churches, which mark what must once have been a great city and the first seat of a national Christianity. Now there are perhaps 300 inhabitants, but Mount Ararat dominates it, and Mount Ararat is not a hill. It is a great white jewel set up against a sheet of dazzling blue.

Hills and ships always seem to me to be alive, and I think they have a personality of their own. Ararat stands for the unassailable. It is like some great fact, such as that what is beautiful must be true. It is grand and pure and lovely, and when the sun sets it is more than this, for then its top is one sheet of rose, and it melts into a mystic hill, and one knows that whatever else may "go to Heaven" Ararat goes there every night.

We visited the old Persian palace built on the river's cliff, and looked out over the gardens to the hills beyond, and saw the mosque, with its blue roof against the blue sky, and its wonderful covering of old tiles, which drop like leaves and are left to crumble.



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Tiflis. 24 January.—I left Erivan on Sunday, January 23rd. It was cold and sharp, and the train was crowded. People were standing all down the corridors, as usual. Nothing goes quicker than eight miles an hour, nothing is punctual, nothing arrives. The stations are filthy, and the food is quite uneatable. I often despair of this country, and if the Russians were not our Allies I should feel inclined to say that nothing would do them so much good as a year or two of German conquest. No one, after the first six months, has been enthusiastic over the war, and the soldiers want to get home. One young officer, 26 years old, has been loafing in Tiflis for six months, and has at last been arrested. Another took his ticket on eight successive nights to leave the place and never moved. At last he was locked in his room, and a motor-car ordered to take him to the station. He got into it, and was not heard of for three days, when his wife appeared, and found her husband somewhere in the town.

Mrs. Wynne and Mr. Bevan have gone on ahead to Baku, but I must wait for my damaged car. A young officer in this hotel shot himself dead this morning. No one seems to mind much.

[Page Heading: RUSSIAN SOCIETY]

25 January.—Last night I was invited to play bridge by one of the richest women in Russia. Her room was just a converted bedroom, with a dirty wall-paper. The packs of cards were such as one might see railway-men playing with in a lamp-room. Our stakes were a few kopeks, and the refreshments consisted of one tepid cup of tea, without either milk or lemon, and not a biscuit to eat. We all sat with shawls on, as our hostess said it wasn't worth while to light a fire so late at night. A nice little Princess Musaloff and Prince Napoleon Murat played with me. We were rich in titles, but our shoulders were cold.

I have not seen a single nice or even comfortable room since I left England, and although some women dress well, and have pretty cigarette-boxes from the renowned Faberje, other things about them are all wrong. The furniture in their rooms is covered with plush, and the ornaments (to me) suggest a head-gardener's house at home with "an enlargement of mother" over the mantelpiece; or a Clapham drawing-room, furnished during some happy year when cotton rose, or copper was cornered. In this hotel the carpets are in holes in the passages, and there are few servants; but I don't fancy that the people here notice things very much.

I went to see *Mme.* — one day in her new house. The rooms were large and handsome. There was a picture of a cow at one end of the drawing-room, and a mirror framed in plush at the other!

I must draw a "character" one day of the very charming woman who is absolutely indifferent to people's feelings. The fact that some humble soul has prepared something for her, or that a sacrifice has been made, or that one kind speech would



satisfy, does not occur to her. These are the people who chuck engagements when they get better invitations, and always I seem to see them with expensive little bags and chains and Faberje enamels. Men will slave for such women—will carry things for them, and serve them. They have “success” until they are quite old, and after they have taken to rouge and paint. A tired woman hardly ever gets anything carried for her.



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26 January.—A day's march nearer home! This is the Feast of St. Nina. There is always a feast or a fete here. People walk about the streets, they give each other rich cakes, and work a little less than usual.

This hotel still keeps its cripples. Prince Murat sits on his little chair on the landing. Prince Tschelikoff has his heart all wrong; there is the man with one leg.

Now *Mlle.* Lepnakoff, the singer, Musaloff, in his red coat, and some heavy Generals are here. We have the same food every day.

[Page Heading: ENFORCED IDLENESS]

Perhaps I was pretty near having a breakdown when I came abroad, and the enforced idleness of this life may have been Providential (all my hair was falling out, and my eyes were very bad, and the war was wearing me down rather); but to sit in an hotel bedroom or to potter over trifles in sitting-rooms seems a poor sort of way of passing one's time. To rest has always seemed to me very hard work. I can't even go to bed without a pile of papers beside me to work at during the night or in the early morning!

When the power of writing leaves me, as it does fitfully and without warning, I have a feeling of loneliness, which helps to convince me of what I have always felt, that this power comes from outside, and can only be explained psychically. I asked a great writer once if he ever experienced the feeling I had of being "left," and he told me that sometimes during the time of desolation he had seriously contemplated suicide.

30 January.—I got a telephone message from Mr. Bevan last night. He says Baku is too horrible, and there is no news of the cars. People are telling me now that if instead of cars we had given money, we should have been feted and decorated and extolled to the skies; but then, where would the money have gone? Last week the two richest Armenian merchants in this town were arrested for cheating the soldiers out of thousands of yards of stuff for their coats. A Government official could easily be found to say that the cloth had been received, and meanwhile what has the soldier to cover him in the trenches?

Armenians are certainly an odious set of people, and their ingratitude is equalled by their meanness and greed. Mr. Hills, who is doing the Armenian relief work here, pays all his own expenses, and he can't get a truck to take his things to the refugees without paying for it, while he is often asked the question, "Why can't you leave these things alone?" Now that Mrs. Wynne has left I am asked the same question about her. Russia can "break" one very successfully.

The weather has turned cold, and there is tearing wind and snow.



1 February.—“No,” says I to myself, in a supremely virtuous manner, “I shall not be beaten by this enervating existence here. I’ll do *something*—if it’s only sewing a seam.”

So out came needles and cotton and mending and hemming, but, would it be believed, I am afflicted with two “doigts blancs” (festered fingers), and have to wear bandages, which prevent my doing even the mildest seam. Oddly enough, this “maladie” is a sort of epidemic here. The fact is, the dust is full of microbes, and no one is too well nourished.



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[Page Heading: SOME "MALADES IMAGINAIRES"]

I am rather amused by those brave strong people who "don't make a fuss about their health." One hears from them almost daily that their temperature has gone up to 103 deg.; "but it's nothing," they say heroically, "or if it is, it's only typhoid, and who cares for a little typhoid?" Does a head ache, there is "something very queer about it, but"—pushing back hair from hot brow—"no one is to worry about it. It will be better tomorrow; or if it really is going to be fever, we must just try to make the best of it." A sty in the eye is cataract, "but lots of blind people are very happy;" and a bilious attack is generally that mysterious, oft-recurring and interesting complaint "camp fever." Cheer up, no one is to be discouraged if the worst happens! A thermometer is produced and shaken and applied. The temperature is too low now; it is probably only typhus, and we mean to be brave and get up.

3 February.—Last night we played bridge. All the princes and princesses moistened their thumbs before dealing, and no one is above using a "crachoir" on the staircase! Oh for one hour of England! In all my travels I have only found one foreign race which seemed to me to be well-bred (as I understand it), and that is the native of India. The very best French people come next; and the Spaniard knows how to bow, but he clears his throat in an objectionable manner. None of them have been licked! That is the trouble. An Eton boy of fifteen could give them all points, and beat them with his hands in his pockets.

I am quite sure that the British nation is really superior to all others. Ours is the only well-bred race, and the only generous or hospitable nation. Fancy a foreigner keeping "open house"! Here the entertainment is a glass of thickened tea, and the stove is frequently not lighted even on a chilly evening. Since I have been in Russia I have had nothing better or more substantial given to me (by the Russians) than a piece of cake, except by the Grand Duke. We brought heaps of letters of introduction, and people called, but that is all, or else they gave an "evening" with the very lightest refreshments I have ever seen. Someone plays badly on the piano, there is a little bridge, and a samovar!

6 February.—The queer epidemic of "gathered fingers" continues here. Having two I am in the fashion. They make one awkward, and more idle than ever. A lot of people come in and out of my sitting-room to "cheer me up," and everyone wants me to tell their fortune. Mrs. Wynne and Mr. Bevan are still at Baku.

Last night I went to Prince Orloff's box to hear Lipkofskaya in "Faust."

My car has come back, and is running well, but the weather has been cold and stormy, with snow drifting in from the hills. I took *Mme. Derfelden* and her husband to Kajura today. Now that I have the car everyone wants me to work with them. The difficulty of transport is indescribable. Without a car is like being without a leg. One simply can't

get about. In order to get a seat on a train people walk up the line and bribe the officials at the place where it is standing to allow them to get on board.{11}



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CHAPTER IV

ON THE PERSIAN FRONT

8 February.—A “platteforme” having been found for my car, I and M. Ignatieff of the Red Cross started for Baku to-day. We found our little party at the Metropole Hotel. Went to the MacDonell’s to lunch. He is Consul. They are quite charming people, and their little flat was open to us all the time we were at Baku.

The place itself is wind-blown and fly-blown and brown, but the harbour is very pretty, with its crowds of shipping, painted with red hulls, which make a nice bit of colour in the general drab of the hills and the town. There are no gardens and no trees, and all enterprise in the way of town-planning and the like is impossible owing to the Russian habit of cheating. They have tried for sixteen years to start electric trams, but everyone wants too much for his own pocket. The morals become dingier and dingier as one gets nearer Tartar influence, and no shame is thought of it. Most of the stories one hears would blister the pages of a diary. When a house of ill-fame is opened it is publicly blessed by the priest!

Kasvin. 18 February.—We spent a week at Baku and grumbled all the time, although really we were not at all unhappy. The MacDonells were always with us, and we had good games of bridge with Ignatieff in the evenings. We went to see the oil city at Baku, and one day we motored to the far larger one further out. One of the directors, an Armenian, went with us, and gave us at his house the very largest lunch I have ever seen. It began with many plates of zakouska (hors d’oeuvres), and went on to a cold entree of cream and chickens’ livers; then grilled salmon, with some excellent sauce, and a salad of beetroot and cranberries. This was followed by an entree of kidneys, and then we came to soup, the best I have ever eaten; after soup, roast turkey, followed by chicken pilau, sweets and cheese. It was impossible even to taste all the things, but the Georgian cook must have been a “cordon bleu.”

On February 16th one of the long-delayed cars arrived, and we were in ecstasies, and took our places on the steamer for Persia; but the radiator had been broken on the way down, and Mrs. Wynne was delayed again. I started, as my car was arranged for, and had to go on board. Also, I found I could be of use to Mr. Scott of the Tehran Legation, who was going there. We travelled on the boat together, and had an excellent crossing to Enzeli, a lovely little port, and then we took my car and drove to Resht, where Mr. and Mrs. McLaren, the Consul and his wife, kindly put us up. Their garden is quiet and damp; the house is damp too, and very ugly. There are only two other English people (at the bank) to form the society of the place, and it must be a bit lonely for a young woman. I found the situation a little tragic.

[Page Heading: KASVIN]



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We drove on next day to this place (Kasvin), and Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin were good enough to ask us to stay with them. The big fires in the house were very cheering after our cold drive in the snow. The moonlight was marvellous, and the mountain passes were beyond words picturesque. We passed a string of 150 camels pacing along in the moonlight and the snow. All of them wore bells which jingled softly. Around us were the weird white hills, with a smear of mist over them. The radiant moon, the snow, and the chiming camels I shall never forget.

Captain Rhys Williams was also at the Goodwins; and as he was in very great anxiety to get to Hamadan, I offered to take him in my car, and let Mr. Scott do the last stage of the journey in the Legation car to Tehran. We were delayed one day at Kasvin, which was passed very pleasantly in the sheltered sunny compound of the house. My little white bedroom was part of the "women's quarters" of old days, and with its bright fire at night and the sun by day it was a very comfortable place in which to perch.

Hamadan. 24 February.—Captain Williams and I left Kasvin at 8 a.m. on February 19th.

I had always had an idea that Persia was in the tropics. *Where* I got this notion I can't say. As soon as we left sheltered Kasvin and got out on to the plains the cold was as sharp as anything I have known. Snow lay deep on every side, and the icy wind nearly cut one in two. We stopped at a little "tschinaya" (tea-house), and ate some sandwiches which we carried with us. I also had a flask of Sandeman's port, given me last Christmas by Sir Ivor Maxwell. I think a glass of this just prevented me from being frozen solid. We drove on to the top of the pass, and arrived there about 3 o'clock. We found some Russian officers having an excellent lunch, and we shared ours and had some of theirs. We saw a lot of game in the snow—great coveys of fat partridges, hares by the score, a jackal, two wolves, and many birds. The hares were very odd, for after twilight fell, and we lit our lamps, they seemed quite paralysed by the glare, and used to sit down in front of the car.

We passed a regiment of Cossacks, extended in a long line, and coming over the snow on their strong horses. We began to get near war once more, and to see transport and guns. General Baratoff wants us up here to remove wounded men when the advance begins towards Bagdad.

The cold was really as bad as they make after the sun had sunk, and an icy mist enveloped the hills. We got within sight of the clay-built, flat Persian town of Hamadan about 10 p.m., but the car couldn't make any way on the awful roads, so I left Captain Williams at the barracks, and came on to the Red Cross hospital with two Russian officers, one a little the worse for drink.

[Page Heading: ARRIVAL AT HAMADAN]



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With the genius for muddling which the Russians possess in a remarkable degree no preparations had been made for me. Rather an unpleasant Jew doctor came to the gateway with two nurses, and the officers began to flirt with the girls, and to pay them compliments. Some young Englishmen, one of whom was the British Consul, then appeared on the scene, so we began to get forward a little (although it seemed to me that we stood about in the snow for a terrible long time and I got quite frozen!). As it was then past midnight I felt I had had enough, so I made for the American missionary's house, which was pointed out to me, and he and his wife hopped out of bed, and, clad in curious grey dressing-gowns, they came downstairs and got me a cup of hot tea, which I had wanted badly for many hours. There was no fireplace in my room, and the other fires of the house were all out, but the old couple were kindness and goodness itself, and in the end I rolled myself up in my faithful plaid and slept at their house.

The next day—Sunday, the 20th—Mr. Cowan, the young Consul, and a Mr. Lightfoot, came round and bore me off to the Consulate. On Monday I began to settle in, but even now I find it difficult to take my bearings, as we have been in a heavy mountain fog ever since I got here. There is a little English colony, the bank manager, Mr. MacMurray, and his wife—a capable, energetic woman, and an excellent working partner—Mr. McLean, a Scottish clerk, a Mr. McDowal, also a Scot, and a few other good folk; whom in Scotland one would reckon the farmer class, but none the worse for that, and never vulgar however humbly born.

On Monday, the 21st, I called on the Russian element—Mme. Kirsanoff, General Baratoff, *etc.* They were all cordial, but nothing will convince me that Russians take this war seriously. They do the thing as comfortably as possible. “My country” is a word one never hears from their lips, and they indulge in masterly retreats too often for my liking. The fire of the French, the dogged pluck of the British, seem quite unknown to them. Literally, no one seems much interested. There is a good deal of fuss about a “forward movement” on this front; but I fancy that at Kermanshah and at — there will be very little resistance, and the troops there are only Persian gendarmerie. No doubt the most will be made of the Russian “victory,” but compared with the western front, this is simply not war. I often think of the guns firing day and night, and the Taubes overhead, and the burning towns of Flanders, and then I find myself living a peaceful life, with an occasional glimpse of a regiment passing by.

* * * * *

To Mrs. Charles Percival.

BRITISH VICE-CONSULATE,
HAMADAN.
23 February, 1916.

MY DEAREST TABBY,



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We are buried in snow, and every road is a dug-out, with parapets of snow on either side. All journeys have to be made by road, and generally over mountain passes, where you may or may not get through the snow. One sees “breakdowns” all along the routes, and everywhere we go we have to take food and blankets in case of a camp out. I have had to buy a motor-car, and I got a very good one in Tiflis, but they are so scarce one has to pay a ransom for them. I am hoping it won't be quite smashed up, and that I shall be able to sell it for something when I leave.

[Page Heading: THE DIFFICULTY OF TRANSPORT]

Transport is the difficulty everywhere in these vast countries, with their persistent want of railways; so that the most necessary way of helping the wounded is to remove them as painlessly and expeditiously as possible, and this can only be done by motor-cars. Only one of Mrs. Wynne's ambulances has yet arrived, and in the end I came on here without her and Mr. Bevan. I was wanted to give a member of the Legation at Tehran a lift; and, still more important, I had to bring a soldier of consequence here. So long as one can offer a motor-car one is everybody's friend.

Yesterday I was in request to go up to a pass and fetch two doctors, who had broken down in the snow. The wind is often a hurricane, and I am told there will be no warm weather till May. I look at a light silk dressing-gown and gauze underclothing, and wonder why it is that no one seems able to tell one what a climate will be like. I have warm things too, I am glad to say, although our luggage is now of the lightest, and is only what we can take in a car. The great thing is to be quite independent. No one would dream of bringing on heavy luggage or anything of that sort, except, of course, Legation people, who have their own transport and servants.

On journeys one is kindly treated by the few Scottish people (they all seem to be Scots) scattered here and there. Everywhere I go I find the usual Scottish couple trying to “have things nice,” and longing for mails from home. One woman was newly married, and had only one wish in life, and that was for acid drops. Poor soul, she wasn't well, and I mean to make her the best imitation I can and send them to her. They make their houses wonderfully comfortable; *but* the difficulty of getting things! Another woman had written home for her child's frock in August, and got it by post on February 15th. Cases of things coming by boat or train take far longer, or never arrive at all.

I shall be working with the Russian hospital here till our next move. There are 25 beds and 120 patients. Of course we are only waiting to push on further. The political situation is most interesting, but I must not write about it, of course. It is rather wonderful to have seen the war from so many quarters.

The long wait for the cars was quite maddening, but I believe it did me good. I was just about “through.” Now I am in a bachelor's little house, full of terrier dogs and tobacco smoke; and when I am not at the hospital I darn socks and play bridge.



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Now that really is all my news, I think. Empire is not made for nothing, and one sees some plucky lives in these out-of-the-way parts. I did not take a fancy to my host at one house where we stayed, and something made me think his wife was bullied and not very happy. A husband would have to be quite all right to compensate for exile, mud, and solitude. Always my feeling is that we want far more people—especially educated people, of course—to run the world; yet we continue to shoot down our best and noblest, and when shall we ever see their like again?

Always, my dear,
Your loving
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

I hope to get over to Tehran on my “transport service,” and there I may find a mail. Some people called ——, living near Glasgow, had nine sons, eight of whom have been killed in the war. The ninth is delicate, and is doing Red Cross work.

* * * * *

26 February.—On Tuesday a Jew doctor took my motor-car by fraud, so there had to be an enquiry, and I don't feel happy about it yet. With Russians *anything* may happen. I have begun to suffer from my chillsome time getting here, and also my mouth and chin are very bad; so I have had to lie doggo, and see an ancient Persian doctor, who prescribed and talked of the mission-field at the same time.

[Page Heading: MISSIONARIES AND RELIGION]

I am struck by one thing, which is so naively expressed out here that it is very humorous, and that is the firm and formidable front which the best sort of men show towards religion. To all of them it means missionaries and pious talk, and to hear them speak one would imagine it was something between a dangerous disease and a disgrace. The best they can say of any clergyman (whom they loathe) or missionary, is, “He never tried the Gospel on with me.” A religious young man means a sneak, and one who swears freely is generally rather a good fellow. When one lives in the wilds I am afraid that one often finds that this view is the right one, although it isn't very orthodox; but the pi-jaw which passes for religion seems deliberately calculated to disgust the natural man, who shows his contempt for the thing wholesomely as becomes him. He means to smoke, he means to have a whisky-peg when he can get it, and a game of cards when that is possible. His smoke is harmless, he seldom drinks too much, and he plays fair at all games, but when he finds that these harmless amusements preclude him from a place in the Kingdom of Heaven he naturally—if he has the spirit of a mouse—says, “All right. Leave me out. I am not on in this show.”

27 February.—On Sunday one always thinks of home. I am rather inclined to wonder what my family imagine I am actually doing on the Persian front. No doubt some of my



dear contemporaries saddle me with noble deeds, but I still seem unable to strike the “noble” tack. Even my work in hospital has been stopped by a telegram from the Red Cross, saying, “Don’t let Miss Macnaughtan work yet.” A typhus scare, I fancy. Such rot. But I am used now to hearing all the British out here murmur, “What *can* be the good of this long delay?”



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[Page Heading: HOW NEWS TRAVELS IN PERSIA]

I am still staying at the British Consulate. The Consul, Mr. Cowan, is a good fellow, and Mr. Lightfoot, his chum, is a real backwoodsman, full of histories of adventures, fights, "natives," and wars in many lands. He seems to me one of those headstrong, straight, fine fellows whom one only meets in the wilds. England doesn't agree with them; they haven't always a suit of evening clothes; but in a tight place one knows how cool he would be, and for yarns there is no one better. He tells one a lot about this country, and he knows the Arabs like brothers. Their system of communicating with each other is as puzzling to him as it is to everyone else. News travels faster among them than any messenger or post can take it. At Bagdad they heard from these strange people of the fall of Basra, which is 230 miles away, within 25 hours of its having been taken. Mr. Lightfoot says that even if he travels by car Arab news is always ahead of him, and where he arrives with news it is known already. Telegraphy is unknown in the places he speaks of, except in Bagdad, of course, and Persia owns exactly one line of railway, eight miles long, which leads to a tomb!

More important than any man here are the dogs—Smudge, Jimmy, and the puppy. Most of the conversation is addressed to them. All of it is about them.

28 February. A day on the Persian front.—I wake early because it is always so cold at 4 a.m., and I generally boil up water for my hot-water bottle and go to sleep again. Then at 8 comes the usual Resident Sahib's servant, whom I have known in many countries and in many climes. He is always exactly alike, and the Empire depends upon him! He is thin, he is mysterious. He is faithful, and allows no one to rob his master but himself. He believes in the British. He worships British rule, and he speaks no language but his own, though he probably knows English perfectly, and listens to it at every meal without even the cock of an ear! He is never hurried, never surprised. What he thinks his private idol may know—no one else does. His master's boots—especially the brown sort—are part of his religion. He understands an Englishman, and is unmoved by his behaviour, whatever it may be. I have met him in India, in Kashmir, at Embassies, in Consulates, on steamers, and I have never known his conduct alter by a hair's breadth. He is piped in red, and let that explain him, as it explains much else that is British. Just a thin red line down the length of a trouser or round a coat, and the man thus adorned is part of the Empire.

The man piped in red lights my fire every morning in Persia, and arranges my tub, and we breakfast very late because there is nothing to do on three days of the week—*i.e.*, Friday, the Persian Sabbath, Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and Sunday, the Armenian Sunday. On these three days neither bazaars nor offices are open. Business is at a standstill. The Consulate smokes pipes, develops photographs, and reads old novels. On the four busy days we breakfast at 10 o'clock, and during the meal we learn what the dogs have done during the night—whether Jimmy has barked, or Smudge has lain on someone's bed, or the puppy "coolly put his head on my pillow."



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About 11 o'clock I, who am acting as wardrobe-mender to some very untidy clothes and socks, get to work, and the young men go to the town and appear at lunch-time. We hear what the local news is, and what Mr. MacMurray has said and Mr. McLean thought, and sometimes one of the people from the Russian hospital comes in. About 3 we put on goloshes and take exercise single-file on the pathways cut in the snow. At 5 the samovar appears and tea and cake, and we talk to the dogs and to each other. We dress for dinner, because that is our creed; and we burn a good deal of wood, and go to bed early.

Travel really means movement. Otherwise, it is far better to stay at home. I am beginning to sympathise with the Americans who insist upon doing two cities a day. We got some papers to-day dated October 26th, and also a few letters of the same date.

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[Page Heading: UNFINISHED ARTICLE ON PERSIA]

Unfinished Article on Persia found among Miss Macnaughtan's papers.

Persia is a difficult country to write about, for unless one colours the picture too highly to be recognisable, it is apt to be uninteresting even under the haze of the summer sun, while in wintertime the country disappears under a blanket of white snow. Of course, most of us thought that Persia was somewhere in the tropics, and it gives us a little shock when we find ourselves living in a temperature of 8 degrees below zero. The rays of the sun are popularly supposed to minimise the effect of this cold, and a fortnight's fog on the Persian highlands has still left one a believer in this phenomenon, for when the sun does shine, it does it handsomely, and, according to the inhabitants, it is only when strangers are here that it turns sulky. Be that as it may, the most loyal lover of Persia will have to admit that Persian mud is the deepest and blackest in the world, and that snow and mud in equal proportions to a depth of 8 inches make anything but agreeable travelling. Snow is indiscriminately shovelled down off the roofs of houses on to the heads of passers-by, and great holes in the road are accepted as the inevitable accompaniment to winter traffic.

In the bazaars—narrow, and filled with small booths, where Manchester cotton is stacked upon shelves—the merchants sit huddled up on their counters, each with a cotton lahaf (quilt) over him, under which is a small brazier of ougol (charcoal). In this way he manages to remain in a thawed condition, while a pipe consoles him for his little trade and the horrible weather. Before him, in the narrow alleys of the bazaar, Persians walk with their umbrellas unfurled, and Russians have put the convenient bashluk (a sort of woollen hood) over their heads and ears. The Arab, in his long camel-skin coat, looks impervious to the weather, and women with veiled faces and long black cloaks pick their way through the mire. Throngs of donkeys, melancholy and overladen, their small feet sinking in the slush, may be with the foot-passengers. Some pariah dogs

make a dirty patch in the snow, and a troop of Cossacks, their long cloaks spotted with huge snow-flakes, trot heavily through the narrow lanes.



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But it is not only, nor principally, of climate that one speaks in Persia at the present time.

Persia has been stirring, if not with great events, at least with important ones, and at the risk of telling stale news, one must take a glance at the recent history of the country and its people. It is proverbial to say that Persia has been misgoverned for years. It is a country and the Persians are people who seem fated by circumstances and by temperament to endure ill-government. A ruler is either a despot or a knave, and frequently both. Any system of policy is liable to change at any moment. Property is held in the uneasy tenure of those who have stolen it, and a long string of names of rulers and politicians reveals the fact that most of them have made what they could for themselves by any means, and that perhaps, on the whole, violence has been less detrimental to the country than weakness.

[Page Heading: THE YOUNG PERSIAN MOVEMENT]

The worst of it is that no one seems particularly to want the Deliverer—the great and single-minded leader who might free and uplift the country. Persia does not crave the ideal ruler; he might make it very unpleasant for those who are content and rich in their own way. It is this thing, amongst many others, which helps to make the situation in Persia not only difficult but almost impossible to follow or describe, and it is, above all, the temperament of the Persians themselves which is the baffling thing in the way of Persian reform. Yet reform has been spoken of loudly, and again and again in the last few years, and the reformation is generally known as the Nationalist or Young Persian Movement. To follow this Movement through its various ramifications would require a clue as plain and as clear as a golden thread, and the best we can do in our present obscurity is to give a few of the leading features.

The important and critical situation evident in Persia to-day owes its beginning to the disturbances in 1909, when the Constitutional Party came into power, forcibly, and with guns ready to train on Tehran, and when, almost without an effort, they obtained their rights, and lost them again with even less effort....

* * * * *

29 February.—The last day of a long month. The snow falls without ceasing, blotting out everything that there may be to be seen. To-day, for the first time, I realised that there are hills near. Mr. Lightfoot and I walked to the old stone lion which marks the gateway of Ekmadan—*i.e.*, ancient Hamadan. I think the snow was rather thicker than usual to-day. Mr. Lightfoot and I went to Hamadan, plodding our way through little tramped-down paths, with snow three feet deep on either side. By way of being cheerful we went to see two tombs. One was an old, old place, where slept “the first great physician” who ever lived. In it a dervish kept watch in the bitter cold, and some slabs of dung kept a smouldering fire not burning but smoking. These dervishes have been carrying messages for Germans. Mysterious, like all religious men, they travel

through the country and distribute their whispers and messages. The other tomb is called Queen Esther's, though why they should bury her at Ekmdan when she lived down at Shushan I don't know.



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We went to see Miss Montgomerie the other day. She is an American missionary, who has lived at Hamadan for thirty-three years. She has schools, *etc.*, and she lives in the Armenian quarter, and devotes her life to her neighbours. Her language is entirely Biblical, and it sounds almost racy as she says it.

There is nothing to record. Yesterday I cleaned out my room for something to do, and in the evening a smoky lamp laid it an inch thick in blacks. The pass here is quite blocked, and no one can come or go. The snow falls steadily in fine small flakes. My car has disappeared, with the chauffeur, at Kasvin. I hear of it being sent to Enzeli; but the whole thing is a mystery, and is making me very anxious. There are no answers to any of my telegrams, and I am completely in the dark.

3 March.—I think that to be on a frozen hill-top, with fever, some boils, three dogs, and a blizzard, is about as near wearing down one's spirits as anything I know.

5 March, Sunday.—In bed all day, with the ancient Persian in attendance.

* * * * *

[Page Heading: THE RETURN OF THE PILGRIM]

The Return of the Pilgrim.

This is not a story for Sunday afternoon. It is true for one thing, and Sunday afternoon stories are not, as a rule, true. They nearly all tell of the return of the Prodigals, but they leave out the return of the Pilgrims, and that is why this parable is not for Sunday afternoon. I write it because I never knew a true thing yet that was not of use to someone.

Most of us leave home when we are grown up. The people who never grow up stop at home. The journey and the outward-bound vision are the signs of an active mind stirring wholesomely or unwholesomely as the case may be. The Prodigal is generally accounted one of those whose sane mind demands an outlet; but he lands in trouble, and gets hungry, and comes back penitent, as we have heard a thousand million times. The Far Country is always barren, the husks of swine are the only food to be had, and bankruptcy is inevitable.

The story has been accepted by many generations of men as a picture of the world, with its temptations, its sins, its moral bankruptcy, and its illusionary and unsatisfying pleasures. Preachers have always been fond of allusions to the husks and swine, and the desperate hunger which there is nothing to satisfy in the Far Country. The story is true, God wot; it gives many a man a wholesome fright, and keeps him at home, and its note of forgiveness for a wasted life has proved the salvation of many Prodigals.



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But there is another journey, far more often undertaken by the young and by all those who needs must seek—the brave, the energetic, the good. It is towards a country distant yet ever near, and it lies much removed from the Far Country where swine feed. Its minarets stand up against a clear and cloudless sky, its radiancy shines from afar off. It is set on a hill, and the road thither is very steep and very long, but the Pilgrims start out bravely. They know the way! They carry torches! They have the Light within and without, and “watchwords” for every night, and songs for the morning. Some walk painfully, with bleeding feet, on the path that leads to the beautiful country, and some run joyously with eager feet. Whatever anyone likes to say, it is a much more crowded path than the old trail towards the pigsty. At the first step of the journey stand Faith and Hope and Charity, and beyond are more wondrous things by far—Glory, Praise, Vision, Sacrifice, Heroism, sublime Trust, the Need-to-Give, and the Love that runs to help. And some of the Pilgrims—most of them—get there.

[Page Heading: DISAPPOINTMENT]

But there is a little stream of Pilgrims sometimes to be met with going the other way. They are returning, like the Prodigal, but there is no one to welcome them. Some are very tragic figures, and for them the sun is for ever obscured. But there are others—quite plain, sober men and women, some humorists, and some sages. They have honestly sought the Country, and they, too, have unfurled banners and marched on; but they have met with many things on the road which do not match the watchwords, and they have heard many wonderful things which, truthfully considered, do not always appear to them to be facts. They have called Poverty beautiful, and they have found it very ugly; and they have called Money naught, and they have found it to be Power. They have found Sacrifice accepted, and then claimed by the selfish and mean, and even Love has not been all that was expected. The Pilgrims return. Their poor tummies, too, are empty, but no calf is killed for them, there is no feasting and no joy. They stay at home, but neither Elder Son nor Prodigal has any use for them. In the end they turn out the light and go to sleep, regretting—if they have any humour—their many virtues, which for so long prevented them enjoying the pleasant things of life.

* * * * *

March.—I lie in bed all day up here amongst these horrible snows. The engineer comes in sometimes and makes me a cup of Benger’s Food. For the rest, I lean up on my elbow when I can, and cook some little thing—Bovril or hot milk—on my Etna stove. Then I am too tired to eat it, and the sickness begins all over again. Oh, if I could leave this place! If only someone would send back my car, which has been taken away, or if I could hear where Mrs. Wynne and Mr. Bevan are! But no, the door of this odious place is locked, and the key is thrown away.



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I have lost count of time. I just wait from day to day, hoping someone will come and take me away, though I am now getting so weak I don't suppose I can travel.

One wonders whether there can be a Providence in all this disappointment. I think not. I just made a great mistake coming out here, and I have suffered for it. Ye gods, what a winter it has been—disillusioning, dull, hideously and achingly disappointing!

[Page Heading: MEMORIES OF HOME]

It is too odd to think that until the war came I was the happiest woman in the world. It is too funny to think of my house in London, which people say is the only "salon"—a small "salon," indeed! But I can hardly believe now in my crowds of friends, my devoted servants, my pleasant work, the daily budget of letters and invitations, and the press notices in their pink slips. Then the big lectures and the applause—the shouts when I come in. The joy, almost the intoxication of life, has been mine.

Of course, I ought to have turned back at Petrograd! But I thought all my work was before me, and in Russia one can't go about alone without knowing the way and the language of the people. Permits are difficult, nothing is possible unless one is attached to a body. And now I have reached the end—*Persia! And there is no earthly use for us, and there are no roads.*

CHAPTER V

THE LAST JOURNEY

My car turned up at Hamadan on March 9th, and on the 13th I said good-bye to my friends at the Consulate, and left the place with a Tartar prince, who cleared his throat from the bottom of his soul, and spat luxuriously all the time. The mud was beyond anything that one could imagine. There was a sea of it everywhere, and men waded knee-deep in slush. My poor car floundered bravely and bumped heavily, till at last it could move no more. Two wheels were sunk far past the hubs, and the step of the car was under mud.

The Tartar prince hailed a horse from some men and flung himself across it, and then rode off through the thick sea of mud to find help to move the car. His methods were simple. He came up behind men, and clouted them over the head, or beat them with a stick, and drove them in front of him. Sometimes he took out a revolver and fired over the men's heads, making them jump; but nothing makes them really work. We pushed on for a mile or two, and then stuck again. This time there were no men near, and the prince walked on to collect some soldiers at the next station. It was a wicked, blowy day, and I crept into a wrecked "camion" and sheltered there, and ate some lunch and slept a little. I wasn't feeling a bit well.



That night we only made twenty miles, and then we put up at a little rest-house, where the woman had ten children. They all had colds, and coughed all the time. She promised supper at 8 o'clock, but kept us waiting till 10 p.m., and then a terrible repast of batter appeared in a big tin dish, and everyone except me ate it, and everyone drank my wine. Then six children and their parents lay in one tiny room, and I and a nurse occupied the hot supper-room, and thus we lay until the cold morning came, and I felt very ill.



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So the day began, and it did not improve. I was sick all the time until I could neither think nor see. The poor prince could do nothing, of course.

[Page Heading: ILLNESS AT KASVIN]

At last we came to a rest-house, and I felt I could go no further. I was quite unconscious for a time. Then they told me it was only two hours to Kasvin, and somehow they got me on board the motor-car, and the horrible journey began again. Every time the car bumped I was sick. Of course we punctured a tyre, which delayed us, and when we got into Kasvin it was 9 o'clock. The Tartar lifted me out of the car, and I had been told that I might put up at a room belonging to Dr. Smitkin, but where it was I had no idea, and I knew there would be no one there. So I plucked up courage to go to the only English people in the place—the Goodwins, with whom I had stayed on my way up—and ask for a bed. This I did, and they let me spread my camp-bed in his little sitting-room. I was ill indeed, and aching in every bone.

The next day I had to go to Smitkin's room. It was an absolutely bare apartment, but someone spread my bed for me, and there were some Red Cross nurses who all offered to do things. The one thing I wanted was food, and this they could only get at the soldiers' mess two miles away. So all I had was one tin of sweet Swiss milk. The day after this I decided I must quit, whatever happened, and get to Tehran, where there are hotels. After one night there I was taken to a hospital. I was alone in Persia, in a Russian hospital, where few people even spoke French!

On March 19th an English doctor rescued me. He heard I was ill, and came to see me, and took me off to be with his wife at his own home at the Legation. I shall never forget it as long as I live—the blessed change from dirty glasses and tin basins and a rocky bed! What does illness matter with a pretty room, and kindness showered on one, and everything clean and fragrant? I have a little sitting-room, where my meals are served, and I have a fire, a bath, and a garden to sit in.

God bless these good people!

* * * * *

[Page Heading: A LETTER FROM TEHRAN]

To Lady Clementine Waring.

BRITISH LEGATION, TEHRAN,
22 March.

DARLING CLEMMIE,



I am coming home, having fallen sick. Do you know, I was thinking about you so much the other night, for you told me that if ever I was really “down and out” you would know. So I wondered if, about a week ago, you saw a poor small person (who has shrunk to about half her size!) in an empty room, feeling worth nothing at all, and getting nothing to eat and no attention! Persia isn’t the country to be ill in. I was taken to the Russian hospital—which is an experience I don’t want to repeat!—but now I am in the hands of the Legation doctor, and he is going to nurse me till I am well enough to go home.



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There are no railways in this country, except one of eight miles to a tomb! Hence we all have to flounder about on awful roads in motor-cars, which break down and have to be dug out, and always collapse at the wrong moment, so we have to stay out all night.

You thought Persia was in the tropics? So did I! I have been in deep snow all the time till I came here.

I think the campaign here is nearly over. It might have been a lot bigger, for the Germans were bribing like mad, but you can't make a Persian wake up.

Ever, dear Clemmie,
Your loving
S. MACNAUGHTAN.

So nice to know you think of me, as I know you do.

* * * * *

26 March.—I am getting stronger, and the days are bright. As a great treat I have been allowed to go to church this morning, the first I have been to since Petrograd.

* * * * *

To Miss Julia Keays-Young.

BRITISH LEGATION, TEHRAN.
1 April.

DARLING JENNY,

In case you want to make plans about leave, *etc.*, will you come and stop with me when first I get home, say about the 5th or 6th May, I can't say to a day? It will be nice to see you all and have a holiday, and then I hope to come out to Russia again. Did I tell you I have been ill, but am now being nursed by a delightful English doctor and his wife, and getting the most ideal attention, and medicines changed at every change in the health of the patient.

I've missed everything here. I was to be presented to the Shah, *etc.*, *etc.*, and to have gone to the reception on his birthday. All the time I've lain in bed or in the garden, but as I haven't felt up to anything else I haven't fashed, and the Shah must do wanting me for the present.

The flowers here are just like England, primroses and violets and Lent lilies, but I'm sure the trees are further out at home.



Your most loving
AUNT SALLY.

* * * * *

To Mrs. Keays-Young.

BRITISH LEGATION, TEHRAN,
8 April.

DEAREST BABY,

I don't think I'll get home till quite the end of April, as I am not supposed to be strong enough to travel yet. My journey begins with a motor drive of 300 miles over fearful roads and a chain of mountains always under snow. Then I have to cross the lumpy Caspian Sea, and I shall rest at Baku two nights before beginning the four days journey to Petrograd. After that the fun really begins, as one always loses all one's luggage in Finland, and one finishes up with the North Sea. What do you think of that, my cat?

[Page Heading: CONVALESCENCE]

Dr. Neligan is still looking after me quite splendidly, and I never drank so much medicine in my life. No fees or money can repay the dear man.

Tehran is *the* most primitive place! You can't, for instance, get one scrap of flannel, and if a bit of bacon comes into the town there is a stampede for it. People get their wine from England in two-bottle parcels.



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Yours as ever,
S.

* * * * *

Tehran. April.—The days pass peacefully and even quickly, which is odd, for they are singularly idle. I get up about 11 a.m., and am pretty tired when dressing is finished. Then I sit in the garden and have my lunch there, and after lunch I lie down for an hour. Presently tea comes; I watch the Neligans start for their ride, and already I wonder if I was ever strong and rode!

It is such an odd jump I have taken. At home I drifted on, never feeling older, hardly counting birthdays—always brisk, and getting through a heap of work—beginning my day early and ending it late. And now there is a great gulf dividing me from youth and old times, and it is filled with dead people whom I can't forget.

In the matter of dying one doesn't interfere with Providence, but it seems to me that *now* would be rather an appropriate time to depart. I wish I could give my life for some boy who would like to live very much, and to whom all things are joyous. But alas! one can't swop lives like this—at least, I don't see the chance of doing so.

I should like to have “left the party”—quitted the feast of life—when all was gay and amusing. I should have been sorry to come away, but it would have been far better than being left till all the lights are out. I could have said truly to the Giver of the feast, “Thanks for an excellent time.” But now so many of the guests have left, and the fires are going out, and I am tired.

END OF THE DIARY.

* * * * *

The rest of the story is soon told.

Miss Macnaughtan left Tehran about the middle of April. The Persian hot weather was approaching, and it would have been impossible for her to travel any later in the season. The long journey seemed a sufficiently hazardous undertaking for a person in her weak state of health, but in Dr. Neligan's opinion she would have run an even greater risk by remaining in Persia during the hot weather.

[Page Heading: STARTING FOR HOME]

Dr. Neligan's goodness and kindness to Miss Macnaughtan will always be remembered by her family, and he seems to have taken an enormous amount of trouble to make arrangements for her journey home. He found an escort for her in the shape of an English missionary who was going to Petrograd, and gave her a pass which enabled



her to travel as expeditiously as possible. The authorities were not allowed to delay or hinder her. She was much too ill to stop for anything, and drove night and day—even through a cholera village—to the shores of the Caspian Sea.

We know very few details concerning the journey home, and I think my aunt herself did not remember much about it. One can hardly bear to think of the suffering it caused her. A few incidents stood out in her memory from the indeterminate recollection of pain and discomfort in which most of the expedition was mercifully veiled, and we learnt them after she returned.



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There was the occasion when she reached the port on the Caspian Sea one hour after the English boat had sailed. She called it the “English” boat, but whether it could have belonged to an English company, or was merely the usual boat run in connection with the train service to England, I do not know. A “Russian” vessel was due to leave in a couple of hours’ time, but for some reason Miss Macnaughtan was obliged to walk three-quarters of a mile to get permission to go by it. We can never forget her piteous description of how she staggered and crawled to the office and back, so ill that only her iron strength of will could force her tired body to accomplish the distance. She obtained the necessary sanction, and started forth once more upon her way.

She stayed for a week at the British Embassy in Petrograd, where her escort was obliged to leave her, so the rest of the journey was undertaken alone.

We know nothing of how she got to Helsingfors, but I believe it was at that place that she had to walk some considerable distance over a frozen lake to reach the ship. She was hobbling along, leaning heavily on two sticks, and just as she stumbled and almost fell, a young Englishman came up and offered her his arm.

In an old diary, written years before in the Argentine, during a time when Miss Macnaughtan was faced with what seemed overwhelming difficulties, and when she had in her charge a very sick man, a kind stranger came to the rescue. Her diary entry for that day is one of heartfelt gratitude, and ends with the words: “God always sends someone.”

Certainly at Helsingfors some Protecting Power sent help in a big extremity, and this young fellow—Mr. Seymour—devoted himself to her for the rest of the journey in a marvellously unselfish manner. He could not have been kinder to her if she had been his mother, and he actually altered all his plans on arriving in England, and brought her to the very door of her house in Norfolk Street. Without his help I sometimes wonder whether my aunt would have succeeded in reaching home, and her own gratitude to him knew no bounds. She used to say that in her experience if people were in a difficulty and wanted help they ought to go to a young man for it. She said that young men were the kindest members of the human race.

[Page Heading: ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND]

It was on the 8th of May that Miss Macnaughtan reached home, and her travels were over for good and all. One is only thankful that the last weeks of her life were not spent in a foreign land but among her own people, surrounded by all the care and comfort that love could supply. Two of her sisters were with her always, and her house was thronged with visitors, who had to wait their turn of a few minutes by her bedside, which, alas! were all that her strength allowed.



She was nursed night and day by her devoted maid, Mary King, as she did not wish to have a professional nurse; but no skill or care could save her. The seeds of her illness had probably been sown some years before, during a shooting trip in Kashmir, and the hard work and strain of the first year of the war had weakened her powers of resistance. But it was Russia that killed her.



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Before she went there many of her friends urged her to give up the expedition. Her maid had a premonition that the enterprise would end in disaster, and had begged her mistress to stay at home.

"I feel sure you will never return alive ma'am," she had urged, and Miss Macnaughtan's first words to her old servant on her return were: "You were right, Mary. Russia has killed me."

Miss Macnaughtan rallied a little in June, and was occasionally carried down to her library for a few hours in the afternoon, but even that amount of exertion was too much for her. For the last weeks of her life she never left her room.

Surely there never was a sweeter or more adorable invalid! I can see her now, propped up on pillows in a room filled with masses of most exquisite flowers. She always had things dainty and fragrant about her, and one had a vision of pale blue ribbons, and soft laces, and lovely flowers, and then one forgot everything else as one looked at the dear face framed in such soft grey hair. She looked so fragile that one fancied she might be wafted away by a summer breeze, and I have never seen anyone so pale. There was not a tinge of colour in face or hands, and one kissed her gently for fear that even a caress might be too much for her waning strength.

Her patience never failed. She never grumbled or made complaint, and even in the smallest things her interest and sympathy were as fresh as ever. A new dress worn by one of her sisters was a pleasure, and she would plan it, and suggest and admire.

It was a supreme joy to Miss Macnaughtan to hear, some time in June, that she had received the honour of being chosen to be a Lady of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Any recognition of her good work was an unfailing source of gratification to her sensitive nature, sensitive alike to praise or blame.

She was so wonderfully strong in her mind and will that it seemed impossible in those long June days to believe that she had such a little time to live. She managed all her own business affairs, personally dictated or wrote answers to her correspondence, and was full of schemes for the redecoration of her house and of plans for the future.

I have only been able to procure three of my aunt's letters written after her return to England. They were addressed to her eldest sister, Mrs. ffolliott. I insert them here:

* * * * *

[Page Heading: MISS MACNAUGHTAN'S LAST LETTERS]

1, NORFOLK STREET, PARK LANE, W. *Tuesday.*

MY DEAREST OLD POOT,



How good of you to write. I was awfully pleased to see a letter from you. I have been a fearful crotch since I got home, and I have to lie in bed for six weeks and live on milk diet for eight weeks. The illness is of a tropical nature, and one of the symptoms is that one can't eat, so one gets fearfully thin. I am something over six stone now, but I was very much less.



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We were right up on the Persian front, and I went on to Tehran. One saw some most interesting phases of the war, and met all the distinguished Generals and such-like people.

The notice you sent me of my little book is charming.

Your loving
S. B .M.

* * * * *

1, NORFOLK STREET, PARK LANE, W., *9 June.*

DARLING POOT,

I must thank you myself for the lovely flowers and your kind letters. I am sure that people's good wishes and prayers do one good. I so nearly died!

Your loving
S. M.

* * * * *

17th June

Still getting on pretty well, but it is slow work. Baby and Julia both in town, so they are constantly here. I am to get up for a little bit to-morrow.

Kindest love. It was naughty of you to send more flowers.

As ever fondly,
SARAH.

* * * * *

As the hot weather advanced it was hoped to move Miss Macnaughtan to the country. Her friends showered invitations on "dear Sally" to come and convalesce with them, but the plans fell through. It became increasingly clear that the traveller was about to embark on that last journey from which there is no return, and, indeed, towards the end her sufferings were so great that those who loved her best could only pray that she might not have long to wait. She passed away in the afternoon of Monday, July 24th, 1916.

A few days later the body of Sarah Broom Macnaughtan was laid to rest in the plot of ground reserved for her kinsfolk in the churchyard at Chart Sutton, in Kent. It is very



quiet there up on the hill, the great Weald stretches away to the south, and fruit-trees surround the Hallowed Acre. But even as they laid earth to earth and dust to dust in this peaceful spot the booming of the guns in Flanders broke the quiet of the sunny afternoon, and reminded the little funeral party that they were indeed burying one whose life had been sacrificed in the Great War.

[Page Heading: THE GRAVE IN CHART SUTTON]

Surely those who pass through the old churchyard will pause by the grave, with its beautiful grey cross, and the children growing up in the parish will come there sometimes, and will read and remember the simple inscription on it:

“In the Great War, by Word and Deed, at Home and Abroad,
She served her Country even unto Death.”

And if any ghosts hover round the little place, they will be the ghosts of a purity, a kindness, and of a love for humanity which are not often met with in this workaday world.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps a review of her war work by an onlooker, and a slight sketch of Miss Macnaughtan's character, may form an appropriate conclusion to this book.



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I stayed with my aunt for one night, on August 7th, 1914. One may be pardoned for saying that during the previous three days one had scarcely begun to realise the war, but I was recalled by telegram from Northamptonshire to the headquarters of my Voluntary Aid Detachment in Kent, and spent a night in town en route, to get uniform, *etc.* Certainly at my aunt's house my eyes were opened to a little of what lay before us. She was on fire with patriotism and a burning wish to help her country, and I immediately caught some of her enthusiasm.

Every hour we rushed out to buy papers, every minute seemed consecrated to preparation for what we could do. There were uniforms to buy, notes of Red Cross lectures to "rub up," and, in my aunt's case, she was busy offering her services in every direction in which they could be of use.

[Page Heading: VOLUNTARY RATIONING]

Miss Macnaughtan must surely have been one of the first people to begin voluntary rationing. We had the simplest possible meals during my visit, and although she was proud of her housekeeping, and usually gave one rather perfect food, on this occasion she said how impossible it was for her to indulge in anything but necessaries, when our soldiers would so soon have to endure hardships of every kind. She said that we ought to be particularly careful to eat very little meat, because there would certainly be a shortage of it later on.

I recollect that there was some hitch about my departure from Norfolk Street on August 8th. It did not seem clear whether my Voluntary Aid Detachment was going to provide billets for all recalled members, and I remember my aunt's absolute scorn of difficulties at such a time.

"Of course, go straight to Kent and obey orders," she cried. "If you can't get a bed, come back here; but at least go and see what you can do."

That was typical of Miss Macnaughtan. Difficulties did not exist for her. When quite a young girl she made up her mind that no lack of money, time, or strength should ever prevent her doing anything she wanted to do. It certainly never prevented her doing anything she felt she *ought* to do.

The war provided her with a supreme opportunity for service, and she did not fail to take advantage of it. Of her work in Belgium, especially at the soup-kitchen, I believe it is impossible to say too much. According to *The Times*, "The lady with the soup was everything to thousands of stricken men, who would otherwise have gone on their way fasting."

Among individual cases, too, there were many men who benefited by some special care bestowed on them by her. There was one wounded Belgian to whom my aunt gave my



address before she left for Russia that he might have someone with whom he might correspond. I used to hear from him regularly, and every letter breathed gratitude to “la dame ecossaise.” He said she had saved his life.



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Miss Macnaughtan's lectures to munition-workers were, perhaps, the best work that she did during the war. She was a charming speaker, and I never heard one who got more quickly into touch with an audience. As I saw it expressed in one of the papers "Stiffness and depression vanished from any company when she took the platform." Her enunciation was extraordinarily distinct, and she had an arresting delivery which compelled attention from the first word to the last.

She never minced the truth about the war, but showed people at home how far removed it was from being a "merry picnic."

"They say recruiting will stop if people know what is going on at the Front," she used to tell them. "I am a woman, but I know what I would do if I were a man when I heard of these things. *I would do my durndest.*"

All through her life the idea of personal service appealed to Miss Macnaughtan. She never sent a message of sympathy or a gift of help unless it was quite impossible to go herself to the sufferer.

She was only a girl when she heard of what proved to be the fatal accident to her eldest brother in the Argentine. She went to him by the next ship, alone, save for the escort of his old yacht's skipper, and a journey to the Argentine in those days was a big undertaking for a delicate young girl. On another occasion she was in Switzerland when she heard of the death, in Northamptonshire, of a little niece. She left for England the same day, to go and offer her sympathy, and try to comfort the child's mother.

"When I hear of trouble I always go at once," she used to say.

I have known her drive in her brougham to the most horrible slum in the East End to see what she could do for a woman who had begged from her in the street—yes, and go there again and again until she had done all that was possible to help the sad case.

[Page Heading: ZEAL TO HELP OTHERS]

It was this burning zeal to help which sent her to Belgium and carried her through the long dark winter there, and it was, perhaps, the same feeling which obscured her judgment when her expedition to Russia was contemplated. She was a delicate woman, and there did not seem to be much scope for her services in Russia. She was not a qualified nurse, and the distance from home, and the handicap of her ignorance of the Russian language, would probably have prevented her organising anything like comforts for the soldiers there as she had done in Belgium. To those of us who loved her the very uselessness of her efforts in Russia adds to the poignancy of the tragedy of the death which resulted from them.



The old question arises: “To what purpose is this waste?” And the old answer comes still to teach us the underlying meaning and beauty of what seems to be unnecessary sacrifice: “She hath done what she could.”

Indeed, that epitaph might fitly describe Miss Macnaughtan’s war work. She grudged nothing, she gave her strength, her money, her very life. The precious ointment was poured out in the service of her King and Country and for the Master she served so faithfully.



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* * * * *

I have been looking through some notices which appeared in the press after Miss Macnaughtan's death. Some of them allude to her wit, her energy and vivacity, the humour which was "without a touch of cynicism"; others, to her inexhaustible spirit, her geniality, and the "powers of sarcasm, which she used with strong reserve." Others, again, see through to the faith and philosophy which lay behind her humour, "Scottish in its penetrating tenderness."

In my opinion my aunt's strongest characteristic was a dazzling purity of soul, mind, and body. She was a person whose very presence lifted the tone of the conversation. It was impossible to think of telling her a nasty story, a "double entendre" fell flat when she was there. She was the least priggish person in the world, but no one who knew her could doubt for an instant her transparent goodness. I have read every word of her diary; there is not in it the record of an ugly thought, or of one action that would not bear the full light of day. About her books she used to say that she had tried never to publish one word which her father would not like her to have written.

She had a tremendous capacity for affection, and when she once loved she loved most faithfully. Her devotion to her father and to her eldest brother influenced her whole life, and it would have been impossible for those she loved to make too heavy claims on her kindness.

[Page Heading: SOCIAL CHARM]

Miss Macnaughtan had great social charm. She was friendly and easy to know, and she had a wonderful power of finding out the interesting side of people and of seeing their good points. Her popularity was extraordinary, although hers was too strong a personality to command universal affection. Among her friends were people of the most varied dispositions and circumstances. Distinction of birth, position, or intellect appealed to her, and she was always glad to meet a celebrity, but distinction was no passport to her favour unless it was accompanied by character. To her poorer and humbler friends she was kindness itself, and she was extraordinarily staunch in her friendships. Nothing would make her "drop" a person with whom she had once been intimate.

In attempting to give a character-sketch of a person whose nature was as complex as Miss Macnaughtan's, one admits defeat from the start. She had so many interests, so many sides to her character, that it seems impossible to present them all fairly. Her love of music, literature, and art was coupled with an enthusiasm for sport, big-game shooting, riding, travel, and adventure of every kind. She was an ambitious woman, and a brilliantly clever one, and her clearness of perception and wonderful intuition gave her a quick grasp of a subject or idea. She had a thirst for knowledge which made learning easy, but hers was the brain of the poet and philosopher, not of the



mathematician. Accuracy of thought or information was often lacking. Her imagination led the way, and left her with a picture of a situation or a subject, but she was very vague about facts and statistics. As a woman of business she was shrewd, with all a Scotchwoman's power of looking at both sides of a bawbee before she spent it, but she was also extraordinarily generous in a very simple and unostentatious way, and her hospitality was boundless.



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Miss Macnaughtan was almost hypersensitive to criticism. Her intense desire to do right and to serve her fellow-beings animated her whole life, and it seemed to her rather hard to be found fault with. Indeed, she had not many faults, and the defects of her character were mostly temperamental.

As a girl she was unpunctual, and subject to fits of indecision when it seemed impossible for her to make up her mind one way or the other. The inconvenience caused by her frequent changes of times and plans was probably not realised by her. Later in life, when she lived so much alone, she did not always see that difficulties which appeared nothing to her might be almost insuperable to other people, and that in houses where there are several members of a family to be considered, no individual can be quite as free to carry out his own plans as a person who is independent of family ties. But when one remembered how splendidly she always responded to any claim on her own kindness one forgave her for being a little exacting.

Perhaps Miss Macnaughtan's greatest handicap in life was her immense capacity for suffering—suffering poignantly, unbearably, not only for her own sorrows but for the sorrows of others. Only those who appealed to her in trouble knew the depth of her sympathy, and how absolutely she shared the burden of the grief. But perhaps they did not always know how she agonised over their misfortunes, and at what price her sympathy was given.

[Page Heading: RELIGIOUS VIEWS]

My aunt was a passionately religious woman. Her faith was the inspiration of her whole life, and it is safe to say that from the smallest to the greatest things there was never a struggle between conscience and inclination in which conscience was not victorious. As she grew older, I fancy that she became a less orthodox member of the Church of England, to which she belonged, but her love for Christ and for His people never wavered.

As each Sunday came round during her last illness, when she could not go to church, she used to say to a very dear sister, "Now, J., we must have our little service." Then the bedroom door was left ajar, and her sister would go down to the drawing-room and play the simple hymns they had sung together in childhood. And on the last Sunday, the day before her death, when the invalid lay in a stupor and seemed scarcely conscious, that same dear sister played the old hymns once more, and as the sound floated up to the room above those who watched there saw a gleam of pleasure on the dying woman's face.

My aunt had no fear of death. There had been a time, some weeks before the end, when her feet had wandered very close to the waters which divide us from the unknown shore, and she told her sisters afterwards that she had almost seemed to see over to

the “other side,” and that so many of those she loved were waiting for her, and saying, “Come over to us, Sally. We are all here to welcome you.”



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Perhaps just at the last, when her body had grown weak, the journey seemed rather far, and she clung to earth more closely, but such weakness was purely physical. The brave spirit was ready to go, and as the music of her favourite hymn pierced her consciousness when she lay dying, so surely the words summed up all that she felt or wished to say, and formed her last prayer in death, as they had been her constant prayer in life:

“In death’s dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy Cross before to guide me.

“And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house for ever.”

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1. Added period missing in original.
2. Added comma missing in original.
3. Original had "Rotsarzt"; changed to "Rotsartz" to be consistent with later occurrences.
4. Original had "vise"; changed to "vise".



5. Original had “pasport”; changed to “passport”.
6. Original had “...road to Calais s blocked...”; changed to “...road to Calais is blocked...”.
7. Note inconsistency in spelling: text has “Reece”, index has “Rees”.
8. Note inconsistency in spelling: text has “Johnnie”, index has “Johnny”.
9. Changed from comma in original to period.
10. Note inconsistency in spelling: text has “Tyszkievcz”, index has “Tyszkievez”; most likely meant to be the Polish name “Tyszkiewicz”.
11. Added period missing in original.
12. Original had “Cowen”; changed to “Cowan”, which is the spelling used in both instances in the text.



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13. Original reference to page 10; changed to page 18, as this contains the actual reference to the German army being driven back.
14. Original had “Lipnakoff”; changed to “Lepnakoff” as the more likely spelling and to be consistent with the text.
15. Original had “Macdonald”; changed to “MacDonald”.
16. Original reference to page 165; changed to page 105, as this contains the actual reference to the French Marines.
17. Note inconsistency in spelling: text has “Johnnie”, index has “Johnny”.
18. Note inconsistency in spelling: text has “Reece”, index has “Rees”.
19. Added period missing in original.
20. Removed comma that was superfluous in the original.
21. Note inconsistency in spelling: text has “Tyszkiewicz”, index has “Tyszkievez”; most likely meant to be the Polish name “Tyszkiewicz”.
22. Added comma missing in original.
23. Original had “Westminister”; changed to “Westminster”.
24. Original had “Mahommedanism”; changed to “Mahomedanism” to be consistent with the text.