

# ***Our Bit***

***Memories of War  
Service by A  
Canadian  
Nursing-Sister***

**M.B. Clint**

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# OUR BIT

Memories of War Service  
by  
A Canadian Nursing-Sister

*M. B. Clint, A.R.R.C.,*



Price \$1.25

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MONTREAL

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MONTREAL

OUR BIT



Memories of War Service  
by  
A Canadian Nurse

TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
MY MOTHER

*“They also serve who only stand and wait”*

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# FOREWORD

## PRO PATRIA

Britons, in this great fight to which you go  
Because where Honour calls you, go you must,  
Be glad, whatever comes, at least to know  
    You have your quarrel just.

\* \* \* \* \*

Others may spurn the pledge of land to land,  
May with the brute sword stain a gallant past;  
But by the seal to which you set your hand  
    Thank God, you still stand fast.

SIR OWEN SEAMAN (“TOUCHSTONE”)

*This and other poems by “Touchstone”  
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of Punch.*

## THE HOUR

(Midnight, Aug. 4, 1914)

We've shut the gates by the Dover Straits,  
And north, where the tides run free,  
Cheek by jowl, our watchdogs prowl,  
Gray hulks in a grayer sea.  
And the prayer that the Empire prays to-night—  
O Lord of our destiny! . . . .  
As the foam of our plunging prows, is white;  
We have stood for peace, and we war for right;  
God give us victory!

\* \* \* \* \*

The west wind blows in the face of the foe . . . .  
Old Drake is beating his drum . . . .  
They drank to 'The Day', for The Hour we pray,  
The day and hour have come.  
The sea-strewn Empire prays to-night . . . .  
O Lord of our destiny! . . . .  
Thou didst give the seas into Britain's might,  
For the freedom of Thy seas we fight  
God give us victory!

JAMES B. FAGAN  
*in the Daily Telegraph.*

# Our Bit: Memories of War Service by A Canadian Nursing-Sister

## I

### 1914. MOBILIZATION, QUEBEC. THE FLEET, GASPE BAY.

On the night of August 4-5, 1914, cable and telegraph wires carried a greater electric thrill across a continent than had up to that date been known in our Dominion of Canada. Amazement, indignation, excitement, patriotism, resolve and eager approval of Great Britain's steadfast struggle to maintain peace, had swept the country during the past week. Hard as it seemed to think of a European war involving all the resources of this western nation in that day of easy living, and expanding prosperity, little as anyone could foresee the colossal tragedy of the next four years, the voice of the pacifist (not a synonym for peace-maker) had not then been heard in the land, and, thank God, our young nation realized that the cause was just, and with a serious enthusiasm men declared themselves as loyal British subjects, ready to stand with King and Empire as champions of liberty and honour.

Some Canadians, following the course of world politics in previous years, and cognizant of the unconcealed purpose of German militarists when they judged "the Day" had dawned, had been long convinced of the inevitability of war. To those so informed, the declaration of hostilities did not come as a bolt from a clear sky. A few nurses had felt it proper to take a military course in the Garrison Hospital at Halifax, offered by the Militia Department. There our professional pioneers of the South African War had been retained as the nucleus of a national service that was to expand to nearly three thousand women. Thus a certain number were qualified to assume duty with the Expeditionary Force, which public opinion demanded.

A queue of young men was filing in and out of Military headquarters in one of the largest cities on the evening of August 1st. Officers and "other ranks" discussed the latest news, and studied maps they afterwards knew only too well. "But", said the A.D.M.S., "we are not yet at war," ("We will be on Tuesday", interjected the nurse applicant) "and I can't issue forms of

enrolment yet. Perhaps no Canadian Sisters will be required with the First Contingent”, he added unprophetically.

Within three weeks however graduates of almost every hospital training school in Canada had volunteered “for the duration”, and one hundred and four nurses among whom were some French-Canadians, were selected to have the honour of serving their country in a minor capacity, and of accompanying that first thirty-three thousand of our Canadian men, who were to lead the way in winning undying glory and praise in some of the severest tests of battle. My nurse-comrades will recall the impatience of that month of waiting, the thought that the war would be over before we sailed, the panic lest a name should be struck off the roll at the last minute. Then the fateful telegram: “You have been selected as Nursing-Sister for service abroad. You will report Quebec, 23rd. . . .” and Mobilization, in which we passed into the military machine indefinitely.

September 23rd. found us assembled at Quebec, that historic city, almost always figuring in events that add lustre to our brief story. By that time Valcartier Camp was completing training and equipment, ships were assembling in the harbour, and the town packed with relatives of the troops, and government officials. The Nursing-Sisters, under Matron Margaret Macdonald (S. A. medal) of the permanent staff, Army Medical Corps, were quartered in the Immigration Hospital on the outskirts of the city, and we found ourselves at once introduced to “active service”. The main floor of the building consisted of a huge draughty space, filled with three-tiered wire bunks, on which we lay sandwiched at night, with our military rugs and “martial cloaks” around us. Not “taking our rest” however, as creaks, coughs and cold precluded that, while a chill rain dripped steadily outside. All night long too, for we were on the main road to Valcartier, artillery wagons or marching troops clanked past, the weird but wonderful beginning of that ceaseless stream that for four years was to pour steadily into France and Flanders and other famous fields.

Here let me say the Canadian Sisters were well billeted throughout the war, occasionally in hotels, most frequently having army beds instead of camp cots to sleep on, usually good food, and what comforts were obtainable. Some of the latter were due to their own initiative of course, and they later acquired the reputation of making their surroundings home-like, though the English army nurses were inclined to think we didn’t know there was a war on. However we never had any reason to regret the Immigration Building accommodation, and classed it as our first experience of army discipline.

The ten following days were full of medical examinations, being outfitted with uniforms, signing forms “in triplicate”, reading “Orders” posted in army parlance—an introduction to that military detail which was to accompany us through every phase of duty in “foreign parts”. For the first time since Nursing was organized as a profession in Canada, nurses from west to east met, and were enrolled in the Canadian Army Medical Corps, subordinating for the time their respective Hospitals to a national Unit. Only four had previously seen active service, and now they were to represent Canada in conjunction with other Dominion Nursing Groups, similarly called into being by the desire to do their “bit” in the emergency. Like the men the lure of adventure was uppermost in the minds of some, experience and mass-action appealed to others, but we like to think that most of those who responded immediately to the call were awaiting a chance to serve, counted not the material cost, and that to the end more nurses were available in the Empire than the authorities accepted. The stimulus to entering the profession that the war created was of course great, and has had its very unfortunate repercussions in recent years in Canada by congestion in its ranks, due also to lack of foresight and policy on the part of hospital authorities, and to there being no plan of distribution of nursing services. Like the fate of our demobilized men also, the Nursing-Sisters in many cases found it difficult, through no fault of their own, to resume professional status where they left off four years before.

Rumours, excursions and alarums kept us agog during the last days of September, mingled with typhoid inoculation, vaccination and such disagreeable incidentals. All was hurry, bustle, instructions, often countermanded, and several groups were suddenly summoned from all directions to pack trunks, strap kit-bags, (oh! those kit-bags!) only to undo them again and retire for another night to our “berths” on the skeleton plan.

At last, however, the day came when the notice-board bore the welcome words: “Sisters will prepare to embark at once”. We had been temporarily assigned in equal numbers to Nos. 1 and 2 General or Base Hospitals, as Regulations (K.R. & O.) in theory did not provide the Stationary or Clearing Hospitals with Sisters, previous to the Great War. Without word to relatives or friends, we were driven to the dock in char-a-bancs at dusk, and embarked on the Franconia, flagship of the Contingent. As we filed up the gangway, hauling our heavy and awkward kit-bags, (the first of many times) the men of the 90th. Winnipeg Rifles, (Little Black Devils) crowded the rails cheering. It was the first tangible evidence of that comradeship which united men and women as never before in war, and especially the Sisters of the Dominion Forces and their respective “Boys”. We were touched by their

loyal devotion then, and are proud to think it has never been extinguished. To-day, and till there are no more left of the Old Brigade, that comradeship still ranks high, with an understanding and a sympathy only those knew who served.

The next day was a scene of the greatest military activity on the dock. Battalions lined up for embarkation, scores of horses ready for one transport, and artillery being loaded on another. One by one the ships, already painted grey, slipped out, and others took their places, while day and night new columns of men paraded on the wharves under the historic fortress, till the 33,000 were all mustered. It seemed a large force in 1914 to sail from these shores, and even those at the head of affairs could scarcely then have imagined the scale of the Canadian contribution actually to be made. Whatever mistakes or shortcomings occurred in equipping a complete Expeditionary Force from a small population in a vast area unprepared for war, the departure of the First Contingent was admirably executed, and the silence of the Press on the movements of the transports as they daily embarked their quota, and sped down the St. Lawrence to an unknown rendezvous, was equally praiseworthy. The Franconia moved out so quietly about 2 A.M. on Oct. 1st. that few realised she had steam up till we woke far down the river. I think it was about 9 A.M., if not earlier, that the first "RUMOURS" of the war, as far as we were concerned, started, and lasted till the hour of demobilization, more than four and a half years later. Perhaps the most steadily abused words of those years were "They say". It was seldom discoverable who "They" were, and after the first year or two "their" remarks were discounted. But on that first morning they were full of supposed authority, and the secret excitement of imagination run riot. "Sealed orders" created a new sensation for all of us.

Quite suddenly early on the morning of the 2nd. we steamed round a point, and saw before us the beautiful panorama of Gaspé Bay, crowded with thirty-one liners that had been diverted on every sea, and assembled these past weeks, such a fleet on such a mission as this continent had never seen, nor thought to see. Naturally, none of the pictures of the fleet swinging at anchor, have been able to do justice to the grandeur of the widespread and animated scene. I remember it was a beautiful Canadian autumn day, the surrounding hills and woods forming a background of brilliant colour, a warm purple haze hanging over the ships. The Franconia, being Headquarters' ship, with 2300 troops on board, moved into the centre, and from it signals and orders constantly went forth to the others. Bugle calls rang across the placid waters, the red Ensign fluttered from every troopship, and small boats plied from ship to shore. A flash of realization came to us of

that in which we were privileged to share . . . a never-to-be-forgotten event in the lives of each. . . an epoch-making precedent in world history. Colonel Sam Hughes came on board to say Good-bye, and in him the Nursing service had a good friend, and later, individual “casualties” a kindly departmental Minister.

On Sunday afternoon, October 3rd., we saw steam up in all the vessels, our escorting cruisers had arrived, as well as the battleship “Glory”, which some of us were to meet a year later 5000 miles away. One by one anchors were weighed, “The Maple Leaf Forever” rang out in a farewell salute as each ship headed east, and took up its station at exact intervals in line ahead. At sea they formed into the three parallel columns, about a mile apart, which never altered place or speed for fourteen days, till the great “Armada” safely reached port. Passing out between the headlands many on the crowded decks must have looked at the receding shore with mingled feelings. The last ships left a golden sunset sinking behind them.

## DRAKE'S DRUM.

*(transposed)*

1588-1805-1916.

Yander looms the Island, yander lie the ships,  
Wi' sailor lads, a-dancin' heel and toe,  
And the shore lights flashin', and the night tide dashin',  
He sees it arl as plainly as he saw it long ago.  
'Take my drum to England, hang it by the shore,  
Strike it when your powders runnin' low;  
If the Dons strike Devon, I'll quit the port of Heaven,  
And drum them up the Channel, as we drummed them long ago.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Call him on the deep sea, call him on the Sound,  
Call him when you sail to meet the foe;  
Where the old trade's plyin'  
And the old flag flyin',  
They shall find him 'ware and wakin', as they found him long ago.

SIR HENRY NEWBOTT

## II

### THE VOYAGE. THE ARMADA AT PLYMOUTH.

The Newfoundland Contingent of 500 men joined us on the 6th., their transport falling in at the rear of the northern column. The cruisers headed each line, while the *Glory* supervised the whole formation. On several occasions one or other darted off on some mysterious errand, after the wireless had sputtered a warning, or when a smudge of smoke appeared on the horizon. One or two tramp steamers were interrogated long before they became visible, and constant naval messages flashed from the Admiralty, and indeed the ends of the earth, few of which were communicated to the "passengers". One day the cruiser "*Good Hope*" raced past at a great speed, signalling "*Good luck, Canadians*". We were not to know till later that she was bound for the Falkland Islands, that within a few weeks she and her crew would have "*paid the price of Admiralty*", meeting her fate gloriously, to be dramatically avenged.

It was the writer's lot to do duty in several areas of the war, and to travel many thousands of miles by sea, so that one was able to understand a little of what the great "*Silent Service*", so typically British, contributed to the salvation of the Empire, and the final outcome of the struggle. Many patriotic Canadians, previous to the war, had deplored the lack of support of the Navy from this Dominion, which owed so much to its protection, the essential defence of a sea-Empire, no outpost untouched by its efficient watchfulness. From Gaspé and Halifax to Plymouth, Glasgow and many other ports, from Boulogne to the Dardanelles, Canadians were constantly wards of the white Ensign, and on land the Navy's magnificent personnel of all ranks performed every sort of service, inspiring perfect confidence, and compelling in all a tribute of admiration. Like the old army which made their bodies a wall till Britain was ready with her citizen soldiery, so the Royal Navy once again stood between a despot and the liberty of the world. Having kept the oceans free and peaceful for all nations during 100 years, it would have been to the general advantage to have this splendid police force maintained, irrespective of jealous rivalries; and the post-war period, with its endless International Conferences, shortsighted vision, and cutting down of this real, non-aggressive peace power, has not evolved anything that can take its place.

The voyage was mostly calm and weather mild for a week. Nearing the Channel vigilance was redoubled, and the greatest care taken that no gleam of light should escape from the darkened ships. The men had physical exercises on deck, and all the ships practised lifeboat and fire drill frequently. The Sisters had certain lectures on war-nursing, sanitation of camps, and military routine. Two impressive church services were held on deck, and as far as we could distinguish the other ships, Divine aid was being sought at the same moment. Concerts and sports were not neglected, and the last evening Officers and Sisters on the Franconia dined together, before the gallant ship's company was scattered, few to meet again or return to Canada. An incident of the voyage which caused excitement was the falling overboard of a sailor of the Royal Edward, which was directly ahead of the Franconia in the centre line. He was rescued in a few minutes by one of the Franconia's boats, the flotilla meanwhile reversing engines, and beginning to form a sort of floating hollow circle. Being a strong swimmer he was in no danger, but from the water viewed with much interest "the whole fleet balled up on account of me!" It was the only time the ships lost their alignment.

Entering the Channel on the evening of Oct. 13th, a choppy sea greeted us characteristically, and shortly before dinner a startling siren blast brought everyone scurrying on deck in all sorts of undress. In the thick dusk the long low shape of one of the cruisers loomed between the lines, which had drawn much closer that day, and the straining troopship abreast us had almost fouled it on its nightly tour of inspection. We had been warned of the various emergency whistles, and the threat of "Collision" caused many a minor one, as hundreds literally tumbled up in distinct haste!

Wireless was now very busy, and rumour gained strength and variety, the consensus of opinion being that we were heading for France. A cold gale blew and there was quite a sea on. The tossing ships, now obscured by mist, now visible on the crest of a wave, formed a different picture from that we had seen each morning since leaving the Gulf. But to those sailing the ocean for the first time, the scene was grand under the lowering sky. Certain ships went ahead, escorted by the Diana, and the other cruisers were constantly roving and circling the fleet, scouting especially to the south. Southampton was now supposed to be our destination, and the Franconia with three of the other troopships drew out of line, and steamed rapidly on, as faint coast lines first took shape. On Oct. 14th., about 1 P.M., as we came abreast of Plymouth Sound, orders were signalled to make port there. "They" said because two German submarines were believed to be off Southampton. Whether it was intended or not, surely Plymouth Harbour was the only and

inevitable English end of our particular great adventure. Back from this western continent came a loyal body of Empire citizens, eager to aid in defence of the old home. Into the famous Devon seaport, which no enemy had ever penetrated, sailed a very different “Armada”, to add a significant episode to the long and memorable pageant it had witnessed down the centuries. Most of the First Contingent were born in “these Islands”, and as they crowded to the rigging, whatever emotions they felt were those of familiar sights, home reminders, and unchanging affection the beauty of England inspires. Among the Canadians who had never seen the land of their ancestors, there was curiosity, lively interest, and perhaps a desire to emulate a tradition and create one.

We had left Canada from a silent coast and with only the benediction of Nature. We anchored beside a crowded and animated shore, continuously roaring a welcome, spontaneous and proud. It was twelve hours before the 32 vessels had tied up, two by two in the winding reaches of the harbour. Who can forget that misty afternoon when one liner after another swung round Drake’s Island, and surprised and wondering groups began to gather on piers, fortifications, and the historic Hoe! Some one raised the cry “The Canadians!” and the echo leaped from point to point. Windows burst open, roof-tops were thronged, all traffic paused along “the Front”, cheers rolled from barracks and masthead, a naval training-brig manned yards, flags, handkerchiefs, shawls and tablecloths waved wildly in the breeze, bands and bugles mingled strains of national anthems with a mighty shout: “Are we downhearted?” to which the Canadians were not slow to respond with a “NO!” that shook the atmosphere. It was a not unfitting salute to Drake and the old sea-dogs “listenin’ down below”, or aloft, who had planted the Flag beyond the seas.

Canada was in possession of the harbour, and as one ship followed another, shouts of “Toronto”, “Montreal”, “Victoria” resounded. . . a new note in the orchestra of the centuries. It was a day to have lived for, even though Salisbury Plain and Flanders’ Fields lay ahead.

Destroyers had guided the Convoy into the harbour, and all about us lay defences seen and unseen, in the harbour mouth and on the headlands. After the acclamations of the afternoon, the singing of war songs, the local shipping as well as the transports and the town brilliantly lit at night, as for a general rejoicing, it was very sobering to read the bad war news, as soon as papers came on board. The sheets of casualties with which we were to become so tragically familiar, came as a shock. We learned with dismay that during two months since hostilities began, Britain’s small defence army had

been decimated, and the flower of her youth were offering themselves for the great sacrifice. Even then no one imagined that four years from the day we landed the Empire would still be at war, and Canada would have put half a million men into the fight.

Next day crowds of motor boats filled with sight-seers circled the ships, cheering the battalions on each, official greetings came from the various Government authorities, and cables from Canada, we heard of acceptance of a second contingent; some Boy Scouts came on board, much elated at the opportunity. The English Press was unstinting in praise and welcome, though many editorials regretted that official secrecy had not allowed a great organized demonstration. Nor must we forget that, though it was our good fortune, as eldest and nearest daughter, to arrive first in a blaze of patriotic fervour, after a unique journey, during those same days, dotted over the surface of every ocean, were innumerable ships from “the uttermost parts of the earth” converging upon the central homeland of the Race, all animated by one sentiment and one purpose. We had no chance of seeing Plymouth’s ancient landmarks then, but ten years later I walked along the Hoe on a summer evening, and saw the townsmen playing bowls on the same green spot where Drake and his gallant friends heard tidings of the Spanish Armada in the Channel. By the grace of God peace with honour was again established, and I felt it was the one magic touch needed to complete the picture of 1914.

“Come the world against her, England yet shall stand.”

\* \* \* \* \*

## EXTRACTS FROM THE ENGLISH PRESS

“The Port of Plymouth, with all its wonderful history, has been the scene of many stirring maritime spectacles, but nothing that ever happened before is to be compared with the scene that was witnessed there yesterday on the arrival of the first contingent of Canadian volunteers who have left their homes in the West to come to the aid of the Motherland in her hour of need.”

“The first of the war contingents promised by Canada has arrived on our shores. It is not merely the first to cross the Atlantic, it is the first to bring to Britain the Imperial message of the Overseas’ Dominions. Plymouth is proud of her historic past, but her contemporary writers can find no parallel to the inspiring

scenes which have been associated with the coming of the Canadians yesterday and to-day. Plymouth did not know that the transports were coming, but none were allowed to pass the famous Hoe without a popular demonstration.”

“The arrival of the Canadians will doubtless rank among the town’s greatest historic memorials, and it has seen many. . . . It was fitting that the landing of the Contingent should be at a place reminiscent of so much glorious history.”

“The visit of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to England will long be remembered by the inhabitants of the port to which fell the honour of giving them their first welcome. Throughout the day the waters of the Hamoaze presented a wonderful and unprecedented spectacle. The display of enthusiasm lasted for hours.

“The great fleet of liners carrying the Canadians has arrived. This is the first answer to Germany’s egregious illusion that the Dominions would not rally to England in this war. With one accord they have grasped the fact that they are fighting for their own liberty as truly as ourselves. . . . We welcome their assistance with gratitude and with pride. The immediate answer of the British peoples to the call to arms is the supreme proof of the moral unity of the Empire which the Germans would destroy. . . . The response shows the splendid spirit of loyalty to those traditions and ideals of a thousand years of which the King and Flag are the honoured symbols and defenders.”

“It is because the Government and people of Canada have realized the far-reaching character of the German ambition and menace, and set themselves to meet it by every sacrifice in their power, that the arrival of the Canadian Contingent has awakened so heartfelt a response in England and France. It is an Empire of Nations that Germany has called to arms, but as Mr. Bonar Law says, instead of breaking up the British Empire, as the enemy confidently expected, this war is destined to weld it far more closely together in all matters of mutual concern and Imperial policy”.

“Plymouth has been the scene of many great events in British history, but never of a more stirring and significant one than when the transports bearing the Canadian troops dropped anchor in the

harbour on Wednesday . . . . It was a living picture of the Empire in action. It was a spectacle, hardly to be paralleled since the Crusades, of free communities voluntarily embracing a cause that passionately appeals to hearts and consciences. As they came up the grey waters of the Channel and approached the Sound, with all its memories of Drake and the great sea-captains of old, the sight was an undying inspiration. . . . Never had merchant-men a more precious argosy, or battleships a more splendid convoy”.

## THE WAR

For all we have and are,  
For all our children's fate,  
Stand up and meet the war,  
The Hun is at the gate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our world has passed away  
In wantonness o'erthrown;  
There's nothing left to-day  
But steel, and fire, and stone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Comfort, content, delight,  
The ages' slow-bought gain,  
They shrivelled in a night . . .  
Only ourselves remain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Though all we know depart,  
The old commandments stand;  
In patience keep your heart,  
In strength lift up your hand.

RUDYARD KIPLING

Aug. 1914.

*(by permission.)*

### III

#### LONDON AT WAR. ST. THOMAS' HOSPITAL.

The Sisters disembarked on the 16th., and were taken to the railway station for London, Lord Kitchener having asked the Governors of St. Thomas Hospital to receive us temporarily. It was an exquisite evening, and the majority of the nurses who had never yet visited that lovely land hung out of the coach windows with exclamations of interest and delight. The ladies of Plymouth presented us with a Union Jack, which flew from our particular window on the way up; also a gift of 100 pounds of Devonshire cream. All along the route the "special" attracted much attention and applause. Scouts and cadets were in force at every station, but could not conceal their disappointment that only *women* were on board. The alert healthy, polite boys pleased us all. Many of them, "in the early morning of their days", were able to offer their lives before the war ended, in succession to those of 1914, who had already cut their last school term for the King's service.

"I say, it's awfully good of you people to come such a long way to help us", said some of the adult spectators. We assured them that thinking Canadians recognized the complete justice of the cause, and that, should Britain suffer defeat, the Empire, greatest force in the world for good, would break up; so that we were fighting for our own freedom as well. Our slow, northern intelligence had grasped the essential points of the situation, some three and a half years before it dawned upon our more mercurial neighbours in the United States. All along the railway the peaceful green fields were invaded by war posters, and uniforms were everywhere. Encampments and troop-trains were frequently passed, and piles of stores were accumulating near London.

At midnight we ran into Waterloo, and were met by char-a-bancs for ourselves and luggage, and deposited at St. Thomas' Hospital. At once a triumph of organization, typically English in its quiet method, was demonstrated by our hostesses. One of the matrons sat in the hall with her aides, and handed each of us a card with the number of our rooms. Supper was provided, and our trunks all came up within an hour. I don't know how much notice the War Office had given the Staff, but we found that 100 rooms, absolutely free of every personal belonging of their rightful occupants, had been prepared for us. It was in fact a vacant hotel at our

disposal for several weeks; and this at a time when convoys of wounded were arriving at the hospital daily, and arrangements had to be adjusted to meet emergencies. Our Matron had her own office, the Florence Nightingale Dining-room was exclusively reserved for us, and nurses attended to our wants. Several Sisters also were detailed to give us information, issue invitations for sight-seeing, provide guides, and in every way assist us. Without fuss, all showed us our desire to serve was appreciated, and on their side some idea enlarged of the unity of the profession, which the distinguished Founder of their training-school had brought into being. Months of extra duty lay behind these Sisters, many of the staff had gone to France, nearly all had already lost friends or relatives, and the housing of 104 persons must have entailed much time and physical and mental labour. Our grateful acknowledgments to them once more.

Invitations poured in upon us; visits to hospitals, Windsor Castle, Harrow School, private receptions, war lectures, etc., and theatre tickets were sent several times a week. Princess Alice, now Countess of Athlone, received us at the Middlesex Hospital, and many Women's Organizations entertained parties. I was impressed by the air of comfort and cheer in the military wards of ancient St. Bartholomew's. Armchairs before the great open fire, red blankets, tables and flowers relieved the monotony of the rows of beds, and were a contrast to the cold and severe lines of most hospital wards in Canada and the United States. Some of us went in the mornings to work at Red Cross supplies under the auspices of the League of Empire and Victoria League, and thus met some of the outstanding women leaders. The Rector of the mediaeval church of St. Bartholomew (1123) invited us to a special service, and the Navy League reserved fifty seats on the platform for a great demonstration in the London Opera House, Oct. 21st. The National Anthems of the Allies were sung in succession with highest enthusiasm; Lady Tree recited Kipling's prophetic lines "The Hun is at the gate", amid a tense silence, and that old patriot, Lord Charles Beresford delivered a stern, resolute address, punctuated with cheers at every other clause. Every reference to the Dominions also came in for rounds of applause. This Trafalgar Day the Nelson Column was festooned with laurel, and its base covered with hundreds of wreaths, naval, military, and from the Empire in all quarters of the seven seas. "England expects that every man TO-DAY will do his duty", ran the century-old motto.

We had arrived in the Empire's capital city at a moment when the first stunned realization that England was at war had subsided. The Retreat from Mons, and the obliteration of the heirs of many families, with carnage undreamed of among the rank and file, had left an ineffaceable, grim mask

upon the people. But there had not yet developed that stoic attitude, that acceptance of war as the chief business of the nation that one saw in 1918. They had not as yet settled into the steel mould, each man and woman a unit in a vast, coordinated machine, to wrest victory from a barbarous foe. Very rarely was mourning worn, and those who had received a fatal War Office telegram one morning, carried on as usual at their Red Cross depot the next day. The part women would play in every field of action except the trenches had not been visualized even by themselves. But on August 5th, as the "Terriers" responded to the call to the Colours, the women of the British Isles closed their ranks, the Victorian grande-dame, the stay-at-home housewife, and the suffragette, young, old, rich, poor, class forgotten, had but one enquiry: "Have you a job for me?" It mattered not what; and they continued to the end, the same cheerful, dogged, persistent, plucky, and resourceful "servers" as their husbands and brothers. Privation, grief, anxiety, overwork, air-raids, only riveted their determination. Comment is unnecessary on what they accomplished. It has been acknowledged by King and Parliament, and carried women by one consent to the equality they had claimed for years. Proof of their capacity and widespread service may be seen to some extent in the Imperial War Museum, and for future ages there is portrayed in the Royal Exchange a fresco dedicated to them. Earl Haig once had read to the troops the account of the courage and coolness of women in a bombed munition factory.

The War Office was the most poignant corner in the country, and a long queue of women seemed to stand there day and night, where the "Missing" list was checked. The streets were crowded, but not so choked as in 1918, when uniforms from every part of the Empire could be seen in the Strand. Everywhere flamed Recruiting Posters: "Your King and Country . . .", and on every street groups of young men in mufti, who had just been passed "fit", marched away to some training-centre. The street lights were dimmed at night, but not as they soon would be. Closing of Galleries and Museums containing national treasures unfortunately denied to the "Colonials" possibly their only chance of seeing these relics, but their military duties left them little time for the "sights". Some priceless articles had been walled up in a lately-completed Tube, but the tombs in the Abbey were not yet sandbagged. The churches were crowded, and more often than not a memorial service for some well-known hero was going on. The buses still had men conductors, and women in breeches had not yet come to town, but for the first time in history, London was in uniform, and its parks armed camps. Waterloo, Victoria and Charing Cross were the chief points of pathetic interest each day, on the arrival of the hospital trains. Relatives,

comrades and throngs of sympathetic onlookers always lined the driveway of the ambulances, sometimes throwing flowers, or calling a cheery greeting; or, regimentally, “Well done the Middlesex!”. . . “Good old Inniskillings!” To this day there seems something missing about the front yard of Charing Cross. The War Office censorship had met with a great deal of criticism, and news was just beginning to be issued more freely, as a few correspondents were allowed in France. The situation was amusingly satirized in a clever skit entitled “Malice-in-Kultur-land”, thus:

“A town in Europe,  
(Blank) o’clock,  
November (dash)  
A fearful shock

Of arms occurred at (blank) to-day,  
And I’m at liberty to say  
That the result was (blank-dash-blank),  
For which we have the (Blanks) to thank.  
The whole (dash) Corps of (censored) Huns  
Supported by (omitted) guns,  
Advanced at daybreak, and were faced  
By (here a passage is erased),  
Who held a very strong position  
Resting upon (a long omission).  
The (blanks) were able to advance  
And occupy (a town in France),  
But presently the (blank) Division  
Attacked the trenches of (excision)

. . . . .

(A paragraph omitted here)  
As a result of which it’s clear  
That further efforts will (the rest  
Of the report has been suppressed).

(Horace Wyatt)

Belgian Refugees swarmed in the city, and were being domiciled in very comfortable quarters in the country. Detailed accounts of the atrocities of the German army (which we are now asked by certain voices not to believe!) were fresh and recent, and had filled the civilized world with horror, but

people still thought of slaughter, bombs and rules of war as a long way off, (as distance is counted in Europe) and had not the faintest idea of the extent of “frightfulness” that was yet to come. Woman spoke to woman of deeds thought to belong to the dark ages, and it was then that women orators appeared in Trafalgar Square urging all young men to enlist, or forever surrender their national title to chivalry and humanity. Besides the refugees, it must be remembered that 5000 Belgian soldiers also were transported to Voluntary British Hospitals in the first months of the war. One of the most pacific Editors in London wrote: “I am accustomed to war, and the horrors of war, but this week I have learned fresh depths of woe. At first English people refused to believe stories of German atrocities. When I returned from the front in Belgium, and told my friends of the sights I had witnessed at places like Termonde, many of them either treated me with good-humoured incredulity, or told me I ought to be ashamed of myself for stirring up hatred against the enemy. WHO TALKS IN THIS WAY TO-DAY? Germany has made herself the pariah nation of the world”.

An American in London commenting on the difference in the crowds as to the prevalence of khaki, the wounded, the great lorries rumbling through the streets with war material, the nightly entraining of troops at the stations, remarked: “But you will search in vain for any sign of agitation or distress. The same traffic, the same streams of calm, self-possessed people going about new duties, and an entire absence of demonstration over either victory or retreat. Your fleet has gained a signal success in the Pacific, your army has driven back the German attempt to seize the Channel ports, and there have been no public rejoicings whatever. An amazing people! I suppose the reason is that the English have set their jaws tight, and are going to leave the shouting till it’s all over.” London papers printed long lists of the gifts and contributions of the Dominions and India to the common good with most appreciative comment.

We ourselves, or rather our uniforms, attracted considerable notice even in these thronged thoroughfares. Our brass buttons, and particularly the lieutenant’s stars on our shoulder-straps, made us conspicuous. A photograph taken at St. Thomas’ Hospital was posted in the window of a great Oxford Street shop, and hundreds paused for a look. We were often stopped and asked who and *what* we were. But in spite of all these intense sensations and scenes our chief idea on returning to the “Home” was to rush to the notice-board, and see if orders for a move to duty had arrived. We felt we should not be “waiting round” when so much was to be done, and two weeks had already elapsed. However finally, No. 2 Stationary Hospital (12 officers and 70 other ranks), was slated for France, and the Commanding

Officer insisted that nurses should accompany the Unit, much to our joy. Then arose the burning question: "What names would be on the list?" The corridors hummed with debate. Would the remainder be distributed to English hospitals? Would some of us get overseas at all? At last the Order! Fifty of the hundred to France, including twenty to English Emergency stations in Boulogne, and the remaining fifty to the Canadian camps on Salisbury Plain. With alacrity which needed no spur we made ready for our respective destinations, happy to think that we were at length to be of use, and have our own part to play.

## FARING TO FLANDERS.

Troops to this England true  
Faring to Flanders,  
God be with all of you,  
And your commanders.

Clear be the sky o'erhead,  
Light be the landing:  
Not till the work is done  
Be your disbanding.

On the old battleground  
Where fought your fathers  
Faithful shall ye be found  
When the storm gathers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Troops to our Empire true,  
And your commanders,  
God be with all of you  
Fighting in Flanders.

THE TIMES. 1914.  
*(Unsigned, reprinted by permission)*

## IV

### ACROSS THE CHANNEL. FIRST CANADIAN HOSPITAL IN FRANCE.

At last we were really on the way, envied of all left behind. At Southampton we were taken for a motor drive of several hours, through beautiful Hampshire, studded with military camps, no payment being accepted, because we were Canadians, and on the 7th November, boarded the hospital ship Carisbrooke Castle, which had just discharged 600 wounded. There was no sleep for anyone that night, as the boat coaled by the wharf, supplies were being taken on, chains rattling, orders relayed, and thud of heavy boxes overhead. It was a grimy group that met at breakfast. The hospital wards were already prepared for the next convoy, six medical officers and twelve Sisters being the complement for sometimes eight hundred wounded, ably assisted by trained orderlies. Every department was comfortable, clean and well-equipped. Steaming down Southampton Water we got a first glimpse of the human and material war resources that were daily being rushed to the invaded countries. It was foggy at first, and our progress was slow, many ships going both ways appearing out of the mist close beside us, while whistles blew and bells clamoured. Many troopships crowded with reinforcements singing "Tipperary" had the right of way, and we met a great fleet of empty ones returning to port. The defences of Portsmouth, or such as we could see of them, were a formidable array, and many destroyers clustered round the Channel entrance. It seemed like a page of past history to see guns mounted at strategic points high up on the cliffs, and clusters of white tents at frequent intervals. All during a calm Sunday afternoon, warm and sunny as June, we were steaming past Beachy Head and the white coast to Folkestone, where we turned south. As night fell weird arcs of light swept across the sky from the searchlights at Dover and Cap Gris-Nez, and occasionally blazed and died on one of the destroyer patrol, or a trawler "fishing" for enemy mines. It was very suggestive of danger and destruction so few miles east along the French shore. Over that marvellously guarded lane of the Straits, kept inviolate for four years, we reached beleaguered France, but as the Boulogne Harbour boom was closed for the night, had to spend another twelve hours at anchor.

While we awaited orders to disembark in the morning, wounded began to arrive on the dock, in long lines of ambulances, and we had our first actual contact with war-wreckage, straight from the front. The walking cases

were provided for on deck, and an endless row of stretchers came up the gangway. The staff were speed and gentleness incarnate, and not a word or groan came from the victims, who had of course already received first aid during the night. A crane lifted a dozen at once on a baggage platform, and Sisters set about changing blood-soaked dressings, while orderlies entered particulars from the tags attached to each uniform. In a corner, covered with the Union Jack, a rough box indicated one who needed no attention. Only a few days before perhaps he had crossed the Channel absolutely "fit". Two other hospital ships arrived, and we were told about 2000 would be embarked before evening.

Australian and Canadian ambulances were to be seen running up and down the steep Grande Rue, so like Quebec; a naval armoured train, camouflaged in colours of brown and green foliage, moved out from the siding, each car bearing the name of a naval hero, and all along the quays, mingled with the French fishing-boats, were loaded lorries, guns, huge piles of war stores, staff cars, cavalry horses, French gendarmes, Red Cross workers, and Allied soldiers in hundreds, each going about some duty, preoccupied and serious; quite a different undertone from England, where as yet war had not become the only normal life. Though the British army used all harbours of the French northern coast at intervals, Boulogne was to be the head and centre. . . the clearing-house. . . of effort for four and a half years, and become, apart from civilians, a British town.

Our impatience to be at work still more increased by these sights, and the grim atmosphere of a life and death struggle, anticipation of which had hung over French heads for 4 years, we still had three weeks of inaction before our Colonel found a suitable building for the first Canadian hospital in France. In the meantime most of us were quartered in a quaint, three-hundred year old Inn within the walls of the fortress, under the shadow of the Cathedral and Godefroi de Bouillon's tower. That bitter first winter it rained or snowed every day, I think, and at night at the Bourgogne we dressed up in wrappers, rugs, stockings and sweaters, before creeping into the damp, icy beds. What air entered was impregnated with a mouldy odour of age and sunlessness. A British cemetery had been opened at the top of the hill, and as we sat at breakfast, soldiers' funerals passed up the narrow street every few minutes, so that the burial service might be read simultaneously at a fixed hour. Great trenches were dug, and three tiers of real coffins placed in them, but only partially covered with earth till quite filled, so that the area looked like a plague-stricken field. But every burial was conducted reverently, and flowers already bloomed on three-months' old sod. The adjacent inhabitants constantly brought garden blossoms to decorate the

graves of “les soldats anglais”. . . a kindly action kept up for years, till the British cemeteries were laid out in their present beautiful form by the War Graves’ Commission. Already some English nurses lay there, first women victims of devotion to duty. We represented the Canadian profession by attending the burial of one from St. Thomas’ Hospital, and placing a wreath on the grave. In the next row, two Church of England chaplains, a Roman Catholic Priest, and a Presbyterian Minister were reciting the final offices over thirty bodies. The “Last Post” wailed and faltered, and a small detachment of men with reversed arms formed a guard of honour. It was a sad and gloomy spot.

All the hotels on the quays were turned into British Hospitals, and the staffs cheerfully carried on with limited equipment, temporarily assisted by twenty of our Canadians. The Great Casino accommodated 1300 cases, cots side by side on the main floor, and galleries, and even the staircase landings. Can the reader imagine 500 men lying in the one great open hall at one time on mattresses on the floor, and on stretchers, as well as the full complement of beds? Anaesthetics were given, and minor operations performed on the beds. There was neither time nor place for anything else, when, after the first battle at Ypres, 20,000 wounded were received in Boulogne in one week! Wonderful work was accomplished there, but still provision was inadequate for needs. The grey and red of Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service Sisters was to the fore on train, ambulance, and many “converted” buildings, the “Regulars” having red shoulder capes, and the “Reserve” Sisters a red border only. The Sisters of the Dominion Services, except Canada, adopted the latter dress. Canadian Army Medical Corps Sisters were conceded the rank of Lieutenant, (Matrons, Captain.) The blue uniform, with brass buttons and leather belt, worn by the Canadian Nursing Service, was designed in 1900 for the South African War detachment, though the colour was at first khaki. We were shown some of the new treatments for wounds developed by England’s foremost surgeons, who from the first did their full part in the fray. An Australian hospital had just been stationed on the cliff at Wimereux, and before they had unpacked, a convoy of wounded descended upon them. We visited it in the midst of heroic efforts to cope with the situation, and retired till a more convenient day. Liaison between the War Office and the various Overseas’ Hospital Nursing Staffs was carried on under the British Matron-in-Chief in France, Miss McCarthy, with headquarters in Boulogne, whence she made tours of inspection. She proved an ‘understanding’, a popular and capable “Chief”, and is now known as Dame Maud, O.B.E., an old Saxon title revived.

The great assemblage of allied troops from a score of countries which made Boulogne such an extraordinary microcosm in 1918, had not yet concentrated, but one of the most interesting sights were the Indian regiments, especially the Lancers. They rode magnificently along the straight tree-bordered “Rues Nationales”, each man in symmetry and martial pose a statue. Pathetic were the tents amid the wet and dirty snowpatches on the heights, the little brazier fires, over which the Hindoos tried in vain to warm stiff fingers. These suffered much for the British Raj, understanding little of the quarrel, but loyal to the command of the King-Emperor. One of the most human aspects of the thousand ramifications of British responsibilities was the careful attention given the religious customs of the various races in food and other details, and the special cemeteries, where these dark subjects of the Empire lie, attest equality of service and honour.

It was a tribute to the character of the British armies that the English churches in France were always full, and a large number were frequently present at Holy Communion. The death of Lord Roberts cast a shadow over the British Community, and his funeral cortège along the quay one dark evening drew forth from the French army and civilians a sincere tribute of respect. His beloved Indians had his last thought, and it seemed fitting that he who had done his utmost to warn the “Kingdom of the Blind” of the coming cataclysm, should not have had to bear the long strain of the consequences of unpreparedness. Will it be so again? It seems so, in spite of all past experience, and the knowledge that the Kaiser would not have broken the peace if England in 1914 had had a million trained men to throw into the scale—that million sacrificed later on the altar of a peace policy not founded on actualities.

Opinions have so differed about the attitude of the French people as a whole to the British that I have often been questioned in regard to personal experience. We had little to do with them officially, but the Sisters were invariably the objects of respectful and friendly comradeship from men and women. The women were marvellous. They took the place of the men in every phase of life immediately, and their stoicism under all conditions of hardship was beyond praise. “C’est la guerre”, “Pour la Patrie”, were no empty phrases on their lips, and they had no compensations but their national spirit. Their men were only paid a few sous for their service, there were no family allowances or Red Cross benefits, and they seldom were notified of their dead till weeks after a battle, and then without details. I never saw any excitement in France. I never saw any depression at the worst of times. They seemed to have taken on the phlegmatic character with which the English are credited. But also they never smiled, and “Les Boches” were

to them the summing up of all that was monstrous and brutal. But they treated the prisoners without mawkish sentimentality, and without vindictiveness. I often marvelled at it. More than one French woman commented with amazement upon the, to them, extraordinary fact that except for the first seven Divisions, all the British soldiers were Territorials or volunteers. "But, Mademoiselle, is it possible that this English army is composed of recruits? Is it then that these young men who give themselves to die are all of the best? . . . But . . . after the war . . . what have you?" Of course they were absolutely logical. Those Canadians who criticize the French should imagine the Germans occupying our southern border, should remember the invasion of 1870, and the cost, and should also give thought to what a boundless, cynical and unprincipled ambition did to France and Belgium, apart from the toll taken of 2,000,000 lives. Let them ask themselves how *they* would feel and act!! And whether those who blamed the French for not being prepared in 1914, are logical in also blaming a firm resolve to be ready so that it shall *not* happen a third time to their children.

At long last the Le Touquet Golf Hotel, set amid woods on the edge of the sand-dunes, twenty-five miles from Boulogne, had been selected, and the Sisters joined Officers and men on the 26th, having a villa a few hundred yards off for our quarters. Then ensued a hectic week of scrubbing everything in sight, except the floors (left to orderlies) unpacking, readjusting furniture, bed-making, and generally turning a sports' hotel (fortunately central-heated) into a semi-modern hospital, setting up an operating theatre, and arranging a schedule of duties. Army medical stores were new and fairly sufficient, and nearly every sister had a source of supply to draw on for extra comforts for the men, besides the bales from the Canadian Red Cross, to which we owed such a debt of gratitude. The wonderful British Red Cross Society also provided many extra sheets and pillows, and fifteen motor ambulances to run from the station three miles away.

The number of beds was 420, and as a special distinction the wards were named after Canadian provinces, "Quebec", "Ontario" and "Nova-Scotia" occupying the ground floor. Hardly was the last bed made when at midnight on the 3rd December, two hundred patients were sent us. Every member of the staff was on his or her mettle, for we felt Canadian efficiency might be judged by this sample of organization and training. Everyone remained up most of the night, hot drinks were in readiness, beds warmed, clean clothing beside each locker, and gallons of hot water on hand. Carried up flights of stairs by our willing orderlies, or stumbling in, uniforms and boots caked with Flanders' mud, too exhausted to speak, four wards were soon occupied,

clothing stripped or cut off, and the men given a bath of some sort. The Medical Officers made rounds, examined injuries, fresh dressings were applied, and within two hours we had the satisfaction of seeing the Convoy, warm, clean, and dead to the world in deepest sleep.

It is a source of gratification that we had the honour of nursing some of the “Old Contemptibles”, men of that deathless band which held the enemy hordes at bay beyond a thin khaki line. Our charts bore the names of nearly all the famous regiments of the British army—the remnants of the first Expeditionary Force, and they had made that splendid stand at Ypres in October which had covered them with glory, when it was known. Little wonder that we were glad and proud to serve them.

The old British “Tommy” was well-disciplined, not loquacious, simple, uncomplaining, humorous and shrewd. They were the most grateful patients, and many wrote us later that they would never forget the kindness of the Canadians, the different “atmosphere” from any hospital they had known, the eagerness and good nature of our orderlies. The latter were chiefly ambulance corps men, untrained in ward duties, but most attentive to the wounded. The greatest suffering was caused by trench foot. Those affected could not bear the bed-coverings, and with difficulty repressed moans when a hasty footstep jarred the floor near them.

Very shortly, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales paid us an informal visit, tramping six miles through the Paris Plage woods. There was a moment’s excitement as we saw him running up the steps, and then, accompanied by the Colonel, he looked in at each ward, men standing or lying “at attention”, all eyes on the slim, youthful figure in service kit, with the wistful glance he seems never to have lost. On leaving he said he would tell his father how well the Canadian hospital was carrying on, and we felt loyally elated.

Within a week many of our first arrivals had been evacuated to England, or minor casualties to Convalescent Camps, and a new lot took their places. Later in the campaign, the in and ex-flow was so rapid after a battle, that it was impossible to remember names, and each man was called by the number of his bed. There might be six “No. 20s” in six days. The clerical labour of the office staff and of Sisters in charge of wards in these circumstances was heavy. And who will ever forget the anomalous “Diet-sheets” designed for peace establishment, but, as far as I had to do with them, a waste of time and paper under war conditions on foreign soil. Among the first Territorials to distinguish themselves, the Liverpool Scottish, were also despatched to No. 2 Canadian Stationary, and we had a chance to compare them with the “Regulars”, and to appreciate the same characteristics, differently expressed.

A few London “Terriers” from nearby camps also were admitted, just arrived from garrison duty in Malta, where in August they had replaced Regulars. Very few realize the huge and complex net-work of plans and movements of the British forces, especially when they fought on fifteen fronts towards the end.

Paris Plage at this time had Voluntary Hospitals, like the Duchess of Westminster’s, and Etaples was one huge camp of men in reserve. Our war news was very scanty all winter. English papers with meagre despatches came late, and Rumour from those who—somehow—had motored to the front, or who had heard through some “Hush, Hush” source, was always contradictory. The wounded seldom knew more than the incidents in their immediate vicinity. Their pronunciation of French place-names (like the classic “Wipers”) moreover, though always a joy, did not help in locating them on the map very often.

A Roman Catholic chaplain was attached to the Unit, but for months none of any other denomination. The omission was kindly filled by the busy Padre from the English hospitals in the area, who used to hold a service in the wards on Sunday afternoons, which the patients seemed to enjoy. This gentleman also walked several miles every other Sunday to celebrate Holy Communion at 7 A.M., and in fact voluntarily took over the care of the hospital wards till a Canadian was sent. The little Church of England near Paris Plage was always crowded from the surrounding British colonies, and it was a pleasure wherever we went in France to find one functioning, not only in its usual way, but undertaking unexpected tasks of every sort, and contributing much to the welfare of the soldiers in hospitals, their relatives, and the spirit of the back-areas, while proclaiming unshaken faith in a God of Justice and Righteousness.

On April 22nd, orders were given to pitch marquees on the ground in front of the hospital, as a severe battle was raging, and casualties heavy. By the next morning our capacity had been raised to 615, and the main building transferred as many of its occupants as possible to the canvas lines, to make room for the expected rush. It came on the 26th, with the arrival of three hundred and twenty-seven Canadians, who had won their spurs just two months after landing in France. The war was certainly brought close that night. Everyone was called on duty, and as each ambulance rolled up friends were recognized, officers, sisters, and orderlies crowded to the stretchers, anxious questions poured forth, shock and relief alternated, as one and another replied, and well-known names were uttered; “B——’s gone. . . G. D. dead. . . Captain P. fell the first hour. . . Didn’t see your brother at the

last. . . Fatally wounded. . .” We all fell silent. We could sense what the casualty list would convey to Canada, but the men themselves, forty-eight hours after the hell of the gas attack at Ypres, were still dazed. It was some days later that they and we heard what honour our brothers-in-arms had won for their country. Telegrams from His Majesty the King, and from Sir John French. . . “They saved the day”. . . showed that the soldiers of the Dominion had proved worthy of the tradition of their ancestors. We were intensely proud amid the general sadness that they had stood the test, even when the tragic “Missing” lists were published.

Our tent lines were hastily evacuated next day to hospitals farther south, so that we might be prepared for the next Red Cross trains, and by 4 A.M. on the 28th, the beds were filled again by men direct from the trenches. After removal of filthy uniforms, to wash and feed the patients, and do dressings occupied all day, and a number of operations had to be performed. A central dressing tent was arranged, and 207 were attended to in that alone. Among the convoy were Londoners of the Queen Victoria Rifles, Artists’ Rifles, young business men, law students and others, some of the finest types we saw in the war, of good family and fortune, who had been among the first to be called up. On the same evening another train-load was signalled, and we closed the day with a total of 560. This strained our resources in every way to the utmost, and the constant orders to send on “walking-cases” down the line and “stretchers” to England, at a few minutes’ notice, caused great uncertainty and confusion, impromptu meals and remaking of beds, etc., several times a day, more fatiguing than the actual unrelenting surgical toil of the week. By March 1st, 1100 had passed through the Clearing Station, as we had temporarily become, and only 100 remained. The emergency had passed, and the staff could now breathe and take stock, and replace supplies all but vanished.

I remember that on May 7th, a Canadian from London visited us, and remarked that there was a rumour before she left town of the sinking of the Lusitania. “Oh, Rumour!” we exclaimed, “we know all about rumours. But this surely can’t be true, because of the effect on America.” But before twenty-four hours had elapsed the news was confirmed, to the horror of the civilized world. It was one of those psychological ‘blunders’ that the Germans consistently committed all through the war.

NOTE: The original staff of No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital, including the first fifty Sisters in France had the honour of being awarded the “1914 Star.”

BELGIUM, 1914.

Liège      Louvain      Malines      Alost. . . .  
Like tolling of a church bell slow,  
Like saints' names murmured these shall flow. . . .  
Liège      Louvain      Malines      Alost.

AGNES K. GRAY.

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TO FRANCE, 1916.

(The glorious epic of Verdun. "Il ne passeront pas.")

Joyous the lark shall soar above the green  
That clothes the fallen, glad the corn shall wave;  
Old eyes shall glow, recalling what hath been,  
And how a new France blossomed from the grave.  
Thou livest to all time, Verdun. Thy dead?  
One hath them in His charge. Be comforted.

"TOUCHSTONE" in Punch.

## V

### A FRENCH EMERGENCY HOSPITAL, ST. NAZAIRE, 1915.

After the First Canadian Expeditionary Force landed at St. Nazaire in February, 1915, that port was closed as a military base, another substituted for the next reinforcements, as was the custom, so that enemy espionage might be baffled in preparing its reports to Berlin. With the curious casualness of selection of individuals, which seemed to be the rule rather than the exception in the army, a medical officer was left behind to forward stores, pay bills, settle business with the French authorities, and generally check over records. One of the transports had run aground in a gale, and had lain at the mercy of the sea for twenty-four hours, with a result of nine serious cases of pneumonia, and thirty surgical casualties. As the Canadians had already entrained for the front, these were sent to one of the large French Emergency Hospitals, which had been commandeered in western France. This one had been a Boys' School, barrack-like buildings surrounding a great square, and the Principal and his wife retained their living quarters. In it were congregated one hundred patients in one long dormitory, lying on beds with only boots and uniform tunics removed, and the windows shut continually! We had seen some French Red Cross Stations at Paris Plage, where minor cases were "bedded out" in rooms a foot deep in straw. Water and air were unlooked-for luxuries, uniforms unchanged, towels, soap etc., in common. After playing cards amid the straw most of the day, the men just rolled over in rows to their communal places at night.

At St. Nazaire there were beds, but little equipment, no nursing, and no trained orderlies. The patients who could walk fetched and carried for the bed-ridden. A Count, recovering from his own wound, saw that the food was distributed, and a College Professor—a private in the ranks, did the odd jobs. The English M.O. above referred to, charge-d'affaires as he already was, being notified of forty British sick, and seeing the environment, not unnaturally decided that a number of burials would be added to his duties, and telegraphed forthwith for nurses.

Three of us were detailed from No. 2 to report for the next train. Hastily packing belongings, for we never knew when we should see them again, we travelled to Paris, and a long, next day's journey via Tours, Nantes, through some of the chateau country to St. Nazaire. We could not enjoy the scenery

however, as a ten-seat coach accommodated sixteen to eighteen, some refugees, some reservists going to their stations, etc. It was impossible to change position, and *foot-room* was strictly limited. The English doctor met us with undisguised relief, and over a café dinner explained the situation. He had succeeded very tactfully in having the Canadian patients separated, the nine pneumonias being in a little class-room, with two windows that opened! Three R.A.M.C. men had come from Paris to act as orderlies. Well-trained and capable, they were a great asset under the circumstances. The Englishman was not attending the Canadians, the French army doctors being in charge of all, and were doing their best for our men, but their procedure was likely to differ from what we had been taught. He counseled us to carry on as our own nursing experience dictated, only being careful not to offend the French. Also he warned us that diet was a difficult question, unless we could solve it by buying extras and cooking them in the wards. "Liquid diet" consisted of a pint of milk with soda water placed beside each man in the morning. If by evening he had consumed it—bien! If not, *not* so good! Ordinary diet was soup served at 11 A.M., and another supply, containing a few vegetables, with a slice of black bread at 4 P.M. (I refer only to this station, which of course may not have been typical of Emergency hospitals elsewhere in France.)

We were then introduced to the Professor and his wife, its peace-time heads at the College, and took a cursory glance at our two wards. One of the three volunteered for night-duty at once, several of the pneumonias being on the danger list, and the other two retired to the room of the Professor's son, who was absent at the front. After several episodes in the long corridors and staircases, reminiscent of Scutari and "the Lady with the lamp", we got our bearings, and decided that this was a new chapter in nursing adventure as well as domestic arrangements.

The place was indeed a caravanseraï. There were convalescent French, conscripts reporting for their battalions, German prisoners exercising in the yard, soldiers returning from leave, and it was Reserve Headquarters. The lack of class in the French nation was manifest; they were one family. Dressers and ambulance men assisted the doctors when they made rounds. The Mayor's wife and other Croix Rouge ladies were responsible for medical supplies, and came every day to make them. They were most cordial; "Les infirmières Canadiennes" received many flowers, and had photos taken every other day with some group, even though no doubt they thought our methods somewhat "mad", a failing of all English-speaking people! One Sister took charge of the fracture cases in a separate Ward, and the night-duty Sister gave her attention to both medical and surgical patients,

having her own humourous excursions and episodes, were she to relate them.

With a spirit-lamp, a saucepan and a boy's desk, the light diet necessary for the pneumonias was provided, but the doctors looked askance at custards, egg-nogs, etc., and one morning remarked dubiously to our Englishman who had dropped in to see us unofficially, "But the nurses, they give them to eat!" Equal to the occasion, our champion answered promptly: "Well you see, I understand that in Canada they have a different type of pneumonia lasting much longer, and so it is a rule to feed patients sooner, *figurez-vous?*" etc. The entente cordiale was saved. Much amazed, but making a note for future reference—after the war—our Frenchman accepted the explanation, and, if he continued to eye the "diet" with disapproval, said nothing more. Their horror of the open windows however never ceased. (And it certainly was bleak and blustery that March.) The shrugs, the ejaculations, shaking of heads, hands raised to heaven and verbal protests said: "Mais, Mademoiselle, in a sense they are your responsibility, your compatriots. On the other hand, it is nearly a dozen men for the Allied armies being prematurely frozen to death, and we, as French physicians,"—etc. A corporal used to be sent twenty minutes ahead, who solemnly thrust his head inside, saluted, marched to the casements and firmly fastened them. We then prepared for morning rounds.

Presently the door was swung open with a flourish, and the Medical Chief entered, with his assistant, one or two students, and some ambulance men. The procession halted just inside the door, and the doctor and students, removing their military caps, bowed profoundly, never seeming to regard us as being also of the army. After these ceremonies and greetings, the patients were examined, and as no stethoscopes were used, even the most dangerously ill were obliged to sit up in bed to be percussed and auscultated. Remarks were audibly expressed about the probable fatal outcome, and the man in the next bed shivered with alarm as we turned to him. The centigrade thermometer, about ten inches long, and one inch thick was a nuisance to translate to our English charts, but we used both.

Before we arrived all but one of the men had been 'cupped', and the English doctor hoped the last would escape, as he did not advise it. I therefore hid the set of cups between the mattresses of an empty bed. Lying in soiled woollen shirts, restless, and with high temperatures, some of the men's backs were irritated and even bleeding when we first saw them. When, on the first morning, the French M.O. wished to treat the ninth patient, long was the search for the bulbs. No trace of them being

forthcoming, the application was postponed, and never took place. They remained concealed till we were ready to depart, when one of our English orderlies surreptitiously removed them to a corner of a distant corridor, where, when found, they formed no doubt, one of the minor mysteries of the war in St. Nazaire! But the doctors were kind and courteous, and when the men began to improve, and had energy enough to be amused, they thought "Rounds" as good as an act in a vaudeville show, so that I often had to suppress incipient giggles from the beds.

I never nursed any French or Germans, but other Canadian nurses did, and found the majority of the latter sullen and resentful. As for the poilus, while accepting attention gratefully, they were certainly of the opinion that most of it was fussy and unnecessary, and in the matter of air and water their attitude was one of resignation! I never had an opportunity of seeing one of the regular French hospitals, where the wounded were served with devotion and skill, but in the others the larger part of the attendance was of the untrained voluntary type. Many French women served very close to the firing-line, and unrecorded deeds of heroism were done every day.

One afternoon when the patients were all convalescent, and sitting up, the French corporal suddenly darted in, with an exasperated: "Encore les fenêtres!", which he shut hastily. The unexpected visitor was the Army Medical Chief on a tour of inspection. After introductions, and the usual compliments, the great man was conducted to the four most interesting cases, who had been expected to die. After much gesture, and staccato explanation, and pointing at the charts, the ward M.O. declared: "This one, now, you see, he was finished there. . . it was not reasonable to diagnose recovery. Mais, enfin, he is cured. And the nurse has given them all sorts of diet, baths in the bed! WINDOWS OPEN NIGHT AND DAY!!" The chief looked nonplussed, the inevitable shrug and uplifted hands followed, when our M.O. remarked, as an afterthought "Pourtant ce sont les Canadiens." "Eh bien!" exclaimed the visitor, welcoming a complete solution of the problem, "in that case. . . ." more rapid fire comment, probably on the vagaries of Canadian pneumonia, and with repeated flourishes and farewells they departed. So did we, a few days later, leaving the English orderlies to carry on, having completed a satisfactory little job of medical nursing. Passing through Paris again, we met some Canadian Sisters who had been taken to police headquarters and interrogated, as it appeared six German spies dressed in Red Cross uniform, had just been captured. We escaped scrutiny as we were known at the Hotel N. . . ., and our "duty" orders had been registered a month previously.

Being without the many comforts which supplemented the bare necessities of the army equipment in our own hospitals, made us realize the value of the British Red Cross Society, and its ceaseless provision, not only for the immense needs of its own nationals, but for all the Allies in their various fields. Their gifts were to be found everywhere, and the St. John's Ambulance Brigade was a close second in service. V.A.D. nurses too often rendered splendid assistance, especially in the final year in France, and staffed many Convalescent Hospitals, at home.

I would venture, with diffidence, to make a suggestion. I believe the Canadian Red Cross supplies were second only to the British Red Cross, and were invaluable. But in spite of that fact they were often not enough. In another war I would say 'quantity before quality'. I mean that I frequently saw printed comments praising highly and deservedly the beautiful work, neatness, and high quality of material contributed, and individual needlework. But only the nurses in the wards knew the importance of the daily requirements, especially in a rush. The quantity can never be too much, but so long as the garments are strong, fine sewing, which occupied the time in which a second article could be made, was unnecessary. The first time a shirt was used possibly it had to be cut open, also pyjama coats. And as there were practically never cloths or old cotton for cleaning, hemmed Red Cross handkerchiefs, etc. were frequently and unavoidably substituted. . . . On active service much is spoiled as it is used, or lost, and never seen again.

Among Canadian Agencies whose generous gifts and supplies were constantly met with throughout the war, must be gratefully remembered the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, whose organised patriotism from coast to coast made our women's contribution to winning the war an invaluable service on a great scale.

About this time I had the opportunity of visiting the Scottish Women's Hospital, on the Race-course at Rouen, where women surgeons and physicians worked for long hours and with very successful results over the first military patients ever allotted to them. I thought their tents were the most comfortable and attractive wards I had seen.

## IN FLANDERS' FIELDS.

In Flanders' Fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders' Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe!  
To you from falling hands we throw  
The torch. Be yours to hold it high!  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders' Fields.

LT. COL. JOHN MCCRAE, Canada.

*(died at Boulogne, on service. 1918.)*

## VI

### A HOSPITAL UNDER CANVAS. WIMEREUX.

In May several of us were transferred to No. 1 Stationary Hospital, which had been established for a month or two in tents on the cliffs near the village of Wimereux, on the eastern outskirts of Boulogne. A gale blew up on the night of our arrival, and we expected to see our marquee ripped from overhead every moment. Straining of ropes and flapping of canvas made a noisier combination than anything ever experienced at sea. There was a great hammering of pegs all next morning. The rows of tents paralleled the railway, about 200 yards away, and as great movements of French troops to another sector, and of British to replace them up the line were going on night and day, troop-trains never ceased one hour. At night we could tell if a hospital train was passing, from its slower motion, and if it came round the curve at ordinary speed, we knew more reinforcements were going up to hold the battered outposts at Ypres, or to dig themselves in among the ruins of some other skeleton town.

Our patients were seldom serious cases, as these went to the numerous adjacent buildings, taken over by the R.A.M.C. But in the constant fighting round the Salient that June, new battalions got their baptism of fire very quickly, and it sometimes happened that a lad who had passed our camp on a train the day before, returned wounded in forty-eight hours. We were in the midst of fields, and all about us the grass was blood-red with thickly-growing poppies. It was often remarked by the French that never before had they known them in such profusion. The "boys" used to love to lie among them, after their dressings were done, and on arrival after a long spell of the hideous front line trenches, the English lads especially longed for a touch of peace and beauty. It was fitting that the contrast, and yet sinister likeness of the scarlet meadows should inspire perhaps the best-known verses of the entire war, those of our Canadian soldier-poet Lt. Colonel John McCrae, M.D. He had been among the first in uniform, serving in a dressing station at Ypres, later going to No. 3 Canadian General Hospital, and in 1918 dying on duty there. His grave is in one of the numerous British cemeteries outside Boulogne, just below the site of our camp that summer, and year by year the poppies blow on the hillside, as he saw them in "Flanders' Fields".

Our higher ground sloped to a pretty valley and the railway, and where our tents ended, a little natural amphitheatre formed a perfect setting for the

concert parties which just then were formed in England to tour the reserve areas, and brighten the monotonous life of the army. I think Ellaline Terriss brought over the first, and it is one of my best recollection of those four years—the picturesque ring of Convalescents, in their blue and white hospital uniforms, with red tie, lounging on the grassy slopes, while their entertainers sang on a platform of boxes in the hollow below. Several times in the hour trains would go by to the east, and the concert would be interrupted while we cheered, and waved aprons, tablecloths, and what-not? The battalions, packed on flat-cars, or hanging out of windows and doors of box-freights (“26 Hommes. . . . 8 chevaux”) responded with a will, always breaking into song, “Tipperary” invariably the first. . . . that totally inadequate, but prophetic ditty. . . . which nevertheless has still power to stir our hearts, when it calls up 100 scenes, and 1000 faces. Alas! for the youth, hope, glory and grief buried under the ruins wrought by the world’s greatest crime.

Next to us in the fields was an English Stationary Hospital, and as Harold Begbie had some months before criticized our uniform very severely, and gratuitously assumed we would not be worth much professionally, I’m afraid the English Sisters looked upon us at first with some prejudice. Discipline and routine were carried out by them exactly the same as in the barrack military hospitals, and it did seem that some of the “Regulars”, trained with a certain rigidity, perhaps failed to allow for front-line conditions, the immense mental strain, and the fact that the Territorials, and afterwards “Kitchener’s Army” were different material, and not accustomed to strict regulation of their actions. If ever the “human touch” was needed, it was in the Great War. We allowed our patients more liberty, but our wards looked less orderly. We often heard men comparing systems, and sometimes had several guests at teatime crawling under the ropes, because our Sisters were accustomed to supplement the rations with fruit, eggs, or other extras. For steady, efficient service however, sacrifice of personal comfort, ability to work without recreation, the English personnel could not be surpassed. Many of their Matrons, as some one said were “Personalities” in their own right. They had a great deal of authority, and the Sisters also completely controlled their wards, subject only to the Medical Officer. We had the military rank, and they the real, established position. Personally, I met many at home and abroad, and fraternized with them equally as with Dominion Sisters, and I think they remember us with kindness.

Kitchener’s Army, in its first instalments, was now landing in Boulogne, ready to take over from its illustrious predecessors, and try to emulate their spirit of cheery fortitude. Thousands were conveyed by road in London

buses, and an ex-Sister relates an incident which I did not witness myself. A dozen or more of these buses, which probably had been plying on their usual routes through Piccadilly or Bayswater the day before were climbing that long, long hill at Boulogne one evening. There had been no time to remove their gay signboards, theatre advertisements, and the like. In a moment of high excitement, the French women on pavement and in the windows began to wave their little black aprons and shoulder shawls, with cries of: “Voilà, Messieurs les Generals *Potache*. . . . et. . . . *l'autre*. . . . qui arrivent! Vive l'Angleterre!” Potash and Purlmutter, and many other painted boards no doubt made wonderful fires in all sorts of corners in France. Great howitzers too sometimes groaned and creaked up the hill, and all kinds of tarpaulin-covered shapes were loaded on the enormous lorries that met every ship, and wended their way steadily towards some objective. But the secret of the Tanks in 1916 was well kept, and no one appears to have caught sight of the “monsters” till they were launched one day with excellent effect upon the astounded Germans, and the no less astonished British army. As usual the Scottish regiments and their bands attracted a particular meed of admiration, and the skirl of the bagpipes became a familiar sound in the distance from the road bordering the great grey walls. The children of the villages were always to be found in close proximity to British soldiers, and when a battalion was in “Rest billets”, one might see many a man with a small figure on his shoulder, another toddler holding his hand, while he smoked his pipe the length of the streets, replying “WEE, wee,” to French greetings, “with the air of one speaking the language.” Truly Picardy and the Pas de Calais were provinces with a double nationality for four years.

Gassed cases were distributed to tent hospitals and we had our share. Those Sisters who by now were winning their way to Clearing Stations, or who were attached to Hospital trains, had told us of the diabolical sufferings and cruel deaths of the victims of German chemistry. One very bad case became our “star” patient. His cyanosed face was the colour of mahogany, and for nearly two weeks he breathed only from oxygen cylinders. Two special nurses were assigned for his care for several days, substituting one tank for another without a break. Enquiries came from Base Medical Stores as to *what* No. 1 Canadian was doing with the oxygen! I was not believed in England when I read from my diary that we used 59 cylinders, but it was recorded at the time. However, to the complete amazement of everyone, K. . . . recovered, walked with assistance along the grassy paths one day, cheered by his sympathetic comrades, and saw England again. His farewell words were in regard to another sick man: “I’ll say the Canadians are looking after him, and he’ll be all right.”

The beaches, the picturesque villages, and the unspoilt, austere north coast of France were a constant source of pleasure in our "hours off", and once on a free day after night-duty, two of us got a "visa" on our permits from the French police, and went as far as Calais, where we spent the night. There we could definitely hear the great guns in a long crescendo toward the south-east, terminating in a sullen, abrupt drop. One shuddered to think of the lives blotted out at each rumble. . . . and those not yet dead. At sea too, we could hear echoes of firing from monitors beyond Dunkirk. The hotel at which we put up had a great hole in front of it covered by planks, from an air-raid the previous Friday, and the Friday after our visit the town was again bombed, with many casualties. I believe it had over a thousand such incidents altogether. At five minutes to eight P.M. the streets were full of townsfolk going about their little affairs, when suddenly a bugle sounded the "Retreat" from the walls. All the wooden sabots clattered over the cobblestones across the square, down side-streets, and up back staircases, dim lamps were blotted out, and before the call was finished, all was silent. Our hotel lights were turned down, and Calais lay under the stars, attuned to war, as in the 14th. century. Rodin's statue, "The Burghers" of Edward III's siege, stood a few yards from the hotel, and here were the English back again within the gates, but as allies in a far greater quarrel.

The Stationary Hospitals in the Boulogne area were cleared almost daily in June, as fighting on the immediate front was expected. On two successive days we had 220, and 387 patients admitted, and by the fourth day only seven remained. But the attack did not materialize, and several hundred beds remained empty for more than a week. During one of these lulls, three of us planned to see how far we could get towards the battle-line, by driving along the country roads. Our objective was St. Omer, where British G.H.Q. was believed to be, though not openly mentioned. It had been remarked that it was impossible to get within three miles, so closely was it hedged about with wire and red tape.

Leaving camp at 6 A.M. by a short cut to the railway, the French guard only casually glanced at our identification papers. British army sisters wearing the honoured headdress of the white veil, could go anywhere in France in those years. At the little station of Guines, we changed to one of the cross-country light railways, which are so fascinating to use—if one is not in a hurry. No fare was requested, and we rolled over the famous field of the Cloth of Gold to Ardres, where we breakfasted at a quaint roadside Inn. Announcing we wished to drive into the country, it appeared Monsieur had a horse and fly which we could hire. He added firmly that he would drive it himself. It was a lovely day, and we thoroughly enjoyed a glimpse of the

terrain to the east, behind which we had been blocked so long, though Rumour said. . . . but that is another story! We produced a map, told the old man we wanted to go to St. Omer, and he made no objection. Were we not of the army? Never had we seen a more peaceful countryside. The great guns were silent, larks sang gaily in the blue, the only sign of war was the absence of men on the farms, and an occasional staff car flashing past in a swirl of dust. About eleven o'clock a town on a hill came into view ahead, and the driver pointed: "St. Omer".

A bridge led over a canal, and a French sentry paused on his beat to interrogate the driver, who referred him to us. We explained that having taken a promenade en voiture, and finding St. Omer was only fifteen miles off, we had come in this direction in order to see it. But, said the soldier, St. Omer was a closed town, no one could enter without a special pass. However as we were "anglaises", the other sentry would speak to us. An English guard on the farther side of the bridge, observing the colloquy, came halfway across in full marching order, bayonet fixed, and saluted. Same explanation, same answer. The English sentry was of the London Artists' Rifles, he would call the corporal of the guard. Where were our permits? We produced what we had, and said no one had told us a special was issued for St. Omer. Surely as we were now at the gate we would be allowed to drive in and see the town. The corporal was afraid not, but finally said he would escort us to the town major. Fixed bayonet and all he piled into the fly, which opened at the back, and we proceeded at a slow walk up the long hill to the Hotel de Ville, contemplated by the double guards, and followed by numerous children, who perhaps had heard of summary executions! Our old Frenchman's countenance had taken on a green tinge, and he looked the picture of dismay. (We found it hard to keep straight faces.) Had he been hired by unauthorized persons? Would he get into trouble? Above all, would he be *paid*? Our obliging corporal, leading the way up the Prefecture stairs, ushered us into a military office, where several English officers and about twenty secretaries and stenographers paused with poised pen and surveyed our group in surprise. Leaving us standing before a barrier, where we assumed as innocent an air as possible, the corporal apparently described our arrival to a young Major, who was clearly 'up against' something unusual.

I had been put forward as spokesman, my companions feeling for some reason that they could remain behind me, and be unobtrusive. I was rather upset by the fear that some of us might laugh too soon. The Major Provost Marshal demanded our names, nationality, hospital, location, and *why* we had chosen this direction for a drive? He said severely: "*Absolutely no one* is allowed in St. Omer. I can't credit your getting here at all." I murmured that

“after all we were in. . . . right in. . . . no one had stopped us on the way, etc.” After an agitated turn or two to his desk still muttering, “I simply can’t understand. . . .”, he enquired, “Well, what are you going to do now?” I said we were hoping, since we were there, that he would give us permission, if such were necessary, to remain long enough to have lunch, see the Cathedral and other objects of interest, and depart in peace. After conning this over for another five minutes, he finally produced a “Temporary Pass”, which I still have, “for Nursing-Sisters D. F. and C. through the posts before sunset.” We felt by this time that we had committed a major crime, but were moved more to mirth than repentance. The Corporal threw open the door impressively, and marshaled us out of the presence, followed by a battery of stares. The old Frenchman was overjoyed to see us descending, and to be assured all was well, that he had not been involved in any conspiracy against *la patrie*. Dismissing him and his horse to their respective dinners, we pursued our own plans. The town seemed empty and dead after the continual bustle of Boulogne, few soldiers appeared in the streets, and the inhabitants evidently were attending to their affairs behind closed windows. Someone indicated the general direction of Sir John French’s chateau on the outskirts, but there were no signs of either “Brass Hats”, despatch-riders, pickets or barricades. All was quietude in the neighbourhood. As we drove down the hill at 3 P.M., heads were hanging out of the windows of the Mairie (*not* the Provost Marshal’s) to witness the departure, and when we presented our permit to the corporal at the bridge we were able to indulge a mutual sense of humour.

As there were still several hours before us, we drove to the station, so as to return by Calais and get a better train for Wimereux. The old Frenchman I feel sure thought he had had a narrow escape, and probably never hired himself and his horse again to unknown women. In the station at Calais there seemed to be rather a commotion. The Dover boat had just left, and some cars ran out of a covered side exit. We had a leisurely trip back to Boulogne, and reached camp at 10 P.M. A few days later my eyes happened to fall on this paragraph in the Daily Mail: “Yesterday the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) and Lord Kitchener visited G.H.Q. A war conference was held at Calais between the Prime Minister, Lord Kitchener, F. M. Sir John French, Lord Crewe and Mr. Balfour with M. Viviani, M. Delcassé, M. Millerand and General Joffre.” We had almost been ‘present’, but the joke, if any, was on us after all.

Three years later at a Canadian Nurses’ Club, I heard a newly arrived graduate from Canada relate a version of the above episode with trimmings. The nurses concerned had been arrested! They had been sent home! Their colonel had to obtain their release! An ‘incident’ had been created between

the English and Canadian authorities!! etc., etc. “And who were these Sisters?” I enquired meekly. “Oh I don’t know. Some of the *old lot*, I guess!” So does Rumour gather to itself shreds and patches of illusion over distance of time and place.

Further Canadian Hospitals were being constantly equipped in Canada, and among those arriving in France that Spring were Nos. 6 (Laval University) and 8 General, French Canadian Units, stationed at Troyes and St. Cloud. During the month we received visits from many of the Nursing-Sisters of “McGill” Hospital (No. 3 General) who were about to join their Unit at Dannes Camier, and on July 1st. we had a Dominion Day Tea, to which representatives of other hospitals were invited. Decorated with flags and flowers the large Mess Marquee presented a pretty sight, and the tea-table, with scattered maple leaves sent from Canada added a Canadian note to the scene. It is strange that one has to go abroad to celebrate a national holiday. Dominion Day should mean more in Canada than closing of business houses, or a weekend trip.

Rumour was very busy too in July with our next destination, more Clearing Hospitals being needed at Abbéville, and orders to pack and strike tents were received at the end of the month. Uncertainty and boredom affected officers and sisters alike. In spells of idleness, discontent, impatience and depression flourished. I remember a chaplain at a Sunday service deploring this attitude, and telling us we should make use of the interval of rest to prepare for future duty. We knew not what the future held, or how hard our next task would be. He was quite right. We did not!

## SACRAMENTUM SUPREMUM.

Ye that with me have fought, and failed, and fought  
To the last desperate trench of battles' crest,  
Not yet to sleep, not yet; our work is nought;  
On that last trench the hopes of all may rest.  
Draw near, my friends, and let your thoughts be high:  
Great hearts are glad when it is time to give;  
Life is no life to him who dares not die,  
And death no death to him that dares to live. . . .  
Drink! to our fathers, who begot us men,  
To the dead voices that are never dumb;  
Then to the land of all our loves, and then  
To the long parting, and the age to come.

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT in the Times.

## VII

### 1915. TO THE EAST. THE MEDITERRANEAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Matters were at this stage when I was granted my first leave, and spent ten days in England. Most young men were by this time in khaki, either doing duty with the “Terriers”, or joining Kitchener’s Army. The country churches had their lists of members at the front posted on their doors, and the Rolls of Honour were already filling up. The proud but pathetic memorial services went on daily, and the Casualty lists in the papers . . . . “Killed in action”. . . . “Died of wounds”. . . . “Missing” . . . . were appalling. Every woman lived in hourly dread of a War Office telegram. Church bells tolled for the young squire, and groups gathered round the cottage gate. Trains were closely curtained at night, and warnings to beware of talking to strangers hung in each coach. Spies were being rounded up here and there, boy scouts were doing useful services in many capacities, and many ex-officers and others over-age were acting as special constables, or relieving coast guardsmen. Along the east coast every house must be completely darkened at nightfall, the first of many raids by sea and air being already a thing of the past. The weight and horror of war as it was being waged had become familiar without losing its sense of unreality. A London paper a few weeks before had expressed the national feeling of grief and dismay that in the world as they had known it such things could be: Under the caption “May, 1915”, the article ran: “No poet has ever put to music the England that we see this May, or the sense we have of its beauty, now being defended at so great a price. Other springs have come and gone, but in this one England seems to be transfigured and solemnly clothed in beauty to show that she is worthy of all the lives now being laid down for her. The light of this spring, even deep in the woods among the bluebells, almost becomes music to the mind, as if those old tunes, in which men used to say all that could not be said in words about their country, were rising from the earth to tell us we are one with our fathers, and must guard the beautiful land in which they laboured and died.

‘Down from the minster tower to-day  
Fall the soft chimes of yore  
Amid the chattering jackdaws’ play,  
But we return no more.’

A year ago we only knew of such times through tales in history books. They move us with sadness and pride, as if they were speaking to us from a mind like our own, as if England were herself living through all our lives and deaths, and expressing herself through every generation of men and the work of their hands, even through her beautiful long-lived trees and her everlasting rivers and hills. . . . Now we understand what the love of country means, and how in countries threatened or oppressed, men have made love-songs about their forests and their mountains. . . . It is for us now to make the glory of our generation, and of this England, so that our children and grandchildren may be grateful to us that we left them no heritage of shame or hatred, but an England unimpaired in strength and in her good name.”

Returning to France on July 30th., I was met at the Boulogne landing-stage with the news that our camp had been struck, the sisters were lodged in Inns at Wimereux, and. . . . that we were under orders to sail for Egypt in two days! Our first reaction was consternation, as we had thought of the war in terms of the western front, though the campaigns in the near east had made us realize the vast scale of operations, and some international problems involved. The majority had rather expected that we should be attached to the Canadian Corps. It seemed now that we should lose our identity, and be side-tracked, and in any case, several changes of equipment and uniform were necessary in short order for a totally different climate. I believe everyone watched the receding shores of France with feelings of sadness and homesickness. Sharing danger and sorrow in common with the population, we had ‘lived’ long in the past nine months. We crossed to Shorncliffe, spent a night at Moore Barracks, another at Folkestone in a fine hotel on the Leas. “Folkestone by night”, like all the east and south coast towns was humourously portrayed on a souvenir I bought. . . . a completely black postcard. The orchestra at dinner greeted the entrance of the Canadians with the strains of “O Canada”, and the guests, nearly all themselves in uniform, stood to honour it. The stately air had become the distinctive national song of the Dominion during these months, nor is it ever likely to be displaced while men remember the occasions and the land where they first heard it as a symbol of a united will, and a common birthplace. It is a matter for much surprise and regret that even now no official English form of words has been selected for general use, among the many translations of the original that have been printed at various times. It is time it should be sung as well as played, though it must of course remain secondary to the “The King”, the anthem of the British Empire.

After a midnight visit from our Canadian Matron-in-Chief, who came to wish us Godspeed, and brought new regulation coats suitable for the near

East, we found ourselves at noon of August 4th., still in a state of astonishment, on board the hospital ship *Asturias*, painted white and green, with a great Red Cross on each side, at this date the largest of ships carrying wounded and sick. We discovered that Nos. 3 and 5 Canadian Stationary Hospitals, the latter formed from Queen's University, Kingston, including seventy more sisters, were ordered to join the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. Stateroom partitions had been removed, and two decks converted into huge wards with swinging cots. More than one hundred sisters were accommodated on one deck; there was lots of air, if no privacy. Within a few hours, air was all we cared about anyway. The Bay of Biscay laid all but three low, and the cots swinging dismally with their pale green occupants made an unhappy vista. "How long before we get out of the Bay?" moaned a sister. "Oh, about thirty-six hours," replied the steward, cheerfully. There was a gasp of horrified protest, and with a feeble: "Then goodnight girls,. . . good-bye!". . . she turned her face to the wall.

As we had been told we would not pass "Gib" till 2 A.M., several resolved to get up, and see it if possible. I wakened exactly at two, and ran up on deck, kimona-clad, to find we were just opposite, but about eight miles nearer the African coast. Summoning the others, we tried to pierce the night, and the Rock looked very mysterious, obscure in shape, with only a dim light here and there at water level. Suddenly, as the informally attired group stood at the rail, we were transfixed by a brilliant beam from some lofty searchlight, and as it followed the *Asturias* vigilantly through the strait, we felt that probably a high-power glass was concentrated on us alone, and that a movement might bring an enquiry signal, if nothing else. At this critical moment of startled immobility, a flood of cold water poured about our ankles, and round the corner of a lifeboat, came men of the crew to swab the decks. We retired hurriedly and in disorder!

From the icy breezes of the Bay, we soon were turning our attention to iced drinks, as it grew very warm off the Morocco shore. On Sunday morning we were anchored outside Malta harbour. A celebration of Holy Communion took place on deck early in the day, and at Divine Service later we were in sight of St. Paul's Bay. The Lesson read was the account of the ship wreck in Acts, and one of the chaplains gave a patriotic address, based on the historic points from Quebec, Plymouth, Salisbury, Trafalgar, Gibraltar and Malta which Canadians were touching in the service of the Empire, whose past history should inspire us to uphold the traditions we had been taught.

There were no orders at Malta for any wandering Canadian Units; the M.E.F. had evidently never heard of us, and so perforce the ship continued on its way, and Rumour was even busier than usual, without a peg to hang a rag on. The wonderful colour of the water, the phosphorescence at night, the beauty of the hills when near shore, make the Mediterranean a Sea apart; ancient and romantic, it weaves a spell upon voyagers, the only sea trip all pleasure. Up to this date, no hospital ships had been sunk by the enemy, (the Asturias later was a victim) and so, brightly lighted, we steamed through the moonlit evenings, all hands on deck and rigging, while sing-songs were a nightly feature in the warm dusk. The ship's Medical staff gave an excellent concert, each member among officers and sisters being talented in some way. An old doctor of eighty, but only looking sixty, delighted everyone with his breezy optimism, and his rendering of "Devon, glorious Devon". The sisters said he worked indefatigably over the wounded, and had given up a city practice, got his uniform and decided on ship duty, before the War Office had accepted his offer of service. I should like to think he lived to see Armistice Day. The Staff of the ship consisted of 10 Medical men, 23 sisters, and 75 orderlies. On the previous voyage from Gallipoli they had had 1500 patients, 150 operations, and buried 60 patients at sea. They worked eighteen hours, and took on frightfully wounded men right from the beach at the Peninsula.

Our C.A.M.C. personnel held many contests and a sports' day with the R.A.M.C., and swapped many yarns doubtless below decks. During the days' run we passed a large number of ships, all except the local sail boats engaged in the business of war for some of the Allies. Troopships were most numerous, but naval vessels were to be seen at all hours churning the waters at high speed, a welcome reminder that in spite of years of aggressive bids for supremacy, all seas had been swept of German craft of every kind a few months after the outbreak of war. On August 11th., we steamed into the wide harbour of Alexandria, crowded with British and Allied shipping, French warships, transports, cattle boats, hospital ships, feluccas and rafts. There was a constant coming and going, and a completely different world lay ashore; sand, palms, white, flat-roofed dwellings, dark-skinned natives, flowing garments, domes of mosques, dust, heat, chatter, and over all a blazing sun. Close to the Asturias a long, low rusty shape lay by the pontoons. It was the submarine B.II, fresh from her gallant exploits in the straits of the Dardanelles.

Again uncertainty prevailed. No one it seemed wanted our three hospitals. Finally No. 5 was assigned to Abassiah, five miles out of Cairo, and Nos. 1 and 3 were to go to the advanced base, the Island of Lemnos.

We had a day on shore, and plunged into the East at one stride. It was 105° in the shade, and the last day of the Feast of Bairam. Banners and tapestry hung from roof and balcony, amid a blaze of colour, bright hues of men's robes (in a land where women wear black exclusively) donkeys and camels with gay trappings, Arab architecture, a jostling crowd, guns, beggars, Australians, sheiks of the desert, cries, smells, hens and sheep being slaughtered on the sidewalk for the buyers, the gutters running red. . . . and a few yards away, tropical gardens, handsome shops and thoroughfares, reminding of Paris, modern motor cars, and European advertisements, make a blend of my recollections of that scorching day. No greater contrast to cool, clean, quiet, green and leafy Folkestone we had left could be conceived, and few travellers can have passed from one to the other without stopping at an intermediate port.

At one pier lay the old Franconia, destined, like the Asturias and a host of others, to have her days ended by an enemy torpedo. (She was sunk on Oct. 4th. 1916.) And, as the sun was setting over the Nile, the Royal Edward pulled out, the men hanging over the railing and on every yardarm to cheer the hospital ship. As we steamed north next day a wireless message was received telling us that the Royal Edward had been sunk by a Turkish submarine, with a loss of 1400 lives. We were to go full speed ahead at night, and zigzag among the Ægean Islands by day, as the same "U" boat was lurking in some inlet. It did not attack us however, and the Delta took three days to do the 800 miles. Personally I was greatly disappointed at the rocky and bleak aspect of the Isles of Greece, of which poets have sung. We passed not far from Patmos, but were told the traditional cave of St. John's vision was on the eastern side.

The Delta had had a frightful trip three days before. Twelve hundred wounded instead of seven hundred were on board, and hundreds were left lying on three miles of narrow beach. Forty-seven died on the way down, and the two night-nurses were exhausted. The most violent fighting since April 25th. was going on. It was said the attack on Achi-Baba had cost 9000 lives and 18,000 wounded, but I have never learned if this estimate was correct. A more sombre aspect of the Mediterranean was conveyed to us in coming months, when we learned of the hundreds of men buried at sea on every return of the hospital ships, so that its smiling waters cover a gallant multitude no man can number of our British dead.

The heat was extremely oppressive both below and on deck, and scarcely changed at night. Eagerly we scanned the horizon. I have a small snap-shot in which a group of Sisters is collected on deck, looking at the

entrance to the harbour of Lemnos. Apart, by the rail, are two figures gazing steadfastly at the shore. Within a month the two lay side by side in the Greek cemetery, on the further side of the ridge that bounded our view.

We had left England without being able to notify our relatives of any destination, and wondered how it was to be done to pass the Censor. "Somewhere in France" in relation to Canada seemed much more definite than "care M.E.F." At last we hit upon a plan. Our two days in Egypt were described, and that we had embarked to go north. Several Islands passed were referred to, and at the end of the letter the question was asked: "Would someone look in a geographical Encyclopaedia, and find out what the Island of Lemnos was noted for in ancient history?" The ruse succeeded. Every name was crossed out *except* Lemnos. Our friends understood.

## THE SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me:  
There is a corner of some foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer earth concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less,  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds, dreams happy as her day,  
And laughter learnt of friends, and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace under an English heaven.

RUPERT BROOKE

*died on service in the Aegean  
(from Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke  
by permission of Dodd, Mead & Co.)*

## VIII

### THE ISLAND OF LEMNOS. ADVANCED BASE.

The complete history of the Dardanelles' campaign has never been written, nor is it likely to be published now. The comparatively minor fact that the steamer River Clyde was not retained as a national memorial, like relics of the Vindictive, seemed to indicate an intention that the tragic landing on the Peninsula were best forgotten. The Mesopotamia débacle received much more publicity and attention, and maladministration was brought to light. Everyone now seems to have realized that the assault on Gallipoli was a brilliant scheme, but a stupendous task to which, when once decided upon, strong support and coordination of the navy and army were indispensable.

But of the conditions prevailing on the Islands of Imbros and Lemnos, and indeed in hospitals and camps in Egypt, the public knows nothing. The whole operations continued to be a bone of contention between the fighting services, and the politicians, and to be treated apparently as a side issue. In spite of untold gallantry therefore of the men who bore the results of divided counsels, it was doomed by a series of preventable blunders. We were given an account of the break down, or rather non-existence of hospital services from many quarters, and the few mentioned here might be greatly multiplied. It was said that after the first attack by the 29th Division on April 25th, only two ships were available to take the wounded to Alexandria, 800 miles away, and one had no medical supplies aboard! Small vessels and rafts landed others on the beach at East Mudros, one of the Lemnian villages, where they died as they lay, without attention except a belated burial. I have seen their graves on that tragic spot. One hundred doctors from Canada and elsewhere had been assembled in August for an expected casualty list. But they were kept inactive on ships at Imbros, while the stream of war wastage was carried past them twenty-five miles back to Lemnos. Then they followed, were redistributed, and eventually many returned to Egypt before being assigned duty. There did not seem a blunder that was not repeated again and again.

Tramp steamers and cattle boats embarked even stretcher cases, practically unattended, while at one time eleven empty hospital ships swung gently at anchor in the harbours of Lemnos and Alexandria. One such freight steamer, crowded above and below rode close beside us. She had

been two days coming the forty miles for some reason. Food, water and dressings were urgently needed. Our boat was well stocked with medical supplies, but when splints were required, they were obtained from somewhere miles further off. Two surgeons and three sisters were sent on board, and though a message came back telling of shocking conditions, and though more than one hundred sisters and many Medical Officers were in idleness in ships close by, they were not reinforced. The five, after ten hours' work managed to give first aid to each case among seven hundred! There seemed to be no central authority, and it was never possible to fix responsibility on anyone for what occurred, it was stated. Another boat tied up alongside. It carried minor cases, but the men were actually starving, unkempt, gaunt and ragged. Dozens lay on straw on deck, some had no boots. They appeared to have no affinity with the healthy-first-line fighting men in France. No food supply was put on board as far as we could see, and when the men begged for something to eat from the Scotian, a troopship on the other side of their vessel, they had to pay for the small quantity handed over. It was seven months since the campaign began, thousands of sick as well as wounded had been deposited on the Island, and we were the first sisters to be sent there!! As a matter of fact the medical cases needed the attention of sisters far more than the surgical casualties, and more nurses should have been assigned to the East from the beginning. Never was a Florence Nightingale more needed for organization, administration and humanitarian direction, and this applies to much more than the hospital situation. Her uncensored letters would have roused the same public resentment as in the Crimean War.

We had been transferred to the Simla (another boat afterwards torpedoed) and for days remained there, among many other "spare parts", feeling as though on a prison hulk. A photo of Lemnos is before me; the splendid harbour, anchorage of the Greek Fleet during the siege of Troy, the stony plain, broken by irregular ridges, and rocky mounds, practically treeless, in the clefts of which white, square-roofed villages clustered; the water towers on every elevation, and in the centre of all the 1000 foot peak of Mount Therma, from which tradition says the Greeks used to signal to Mount Athos on the mainland, during the ten years' Trojan War. It was a desolate scene and a primitive people, about 25,000 in number, who were popularly supposed to be taking money from both sides, and to have various ways of notifying the Turks of departures from the harbour. The Island itself we were told comprised more than 150 square miles, had a very poor water supply, and wood had to be imported; all of which showed it was not an ideal spot for establishing the hospital base, made necessary by the distance

from Egypt. The small town of Kastro faced the Greek mainland. The official figures of sick, as distinct from wounded, at the Dardanelles totalled nearly 97,000.

This then was our new sphere of duty—one of the four locales of prehistoric and ancient legend and origins of human history in which Empire troops fought. The Officers and orderlies of our Unit had gone ahead of us on another vessel, and spent four blistering days unloading stores and baggage, pitching tents, and trying to organize some sort of system of food supply and sanitation. Meantime on the Simla what we saw and heard coloured all our months on that ghastly Island. Minor actions and raids still went on at intervals, but for the next six months it was disease that decimated the army on Gallipoli. After August no wounded were landed, which made it considerably irksome for our Medical Staff, who were nearly all Surgeons. Till about the end on Lemnos there was no canteen, no Red Cross, no Y.M.C.A.; in fact the unfortunate men sent periodically to the so-called “Rest Camps”, often preferred their hardships in the dugouts of Seddel-Bahr. But the outgoing troopships still managed to raise a cheer, and the little Thames’ steamers and tugs from the Mersey puffing round did their best to lend an air of casual ‘Business as usual’ to what would have been thought a few years before an incredible scenario.

There are no piers at Lemnos, therefore we and our light luggage had to be landed in small boats from a warship, the Navy as usual being on hand for every emergency. And whose boats should these prove to be but those of our old escort H.M.S. Glory, from which we had parted ten months before. Several troopships of the Canadian Armada also had reappeared in Mudros Bay. Deposited on the beach, we piled suitcases, and started on foot for the camp, a mile or so away. The rough, dry ground, for it had not rained for many months, the sparse scrub, the arid, untilled soil, stones, dust and colourless monotony made the walk a long one. At Alexandria, some of our sisters, told of the heat, had bought white shoes and stockings, and a few parasols, and these had now been produced as a ‘chic’ addition to blue uniform and accessories! As far as I know we were the first white women, other than the natives, and they were not very white, to set foot on this classic ground, and surely since the Lemnian women killed off their husbands, or Jason’s Golden Fleece expedition appeared, no stranger procession had wended its way over the inhospitable Island. It was a meeting place of the Antipodes. Australians, New Zealanders, Newfoundlanders, Canadians, Irish mingled with the 29th Division of the Regular army, and other Divisions of the Motherland. Indians were there, and Greeks and Egyptian labourers, and Turkish prisoners. Mesopotamia

and the Dardanelles it would seem poured out rich libations of foreign blood to the old gods, Egypt as of old was a refuge and storehouse, and Palestine the happy exception to the tale of failure and gloom.

Men of the 'Base Details' and Rest Camps stared at this odd feminine invasion, a few of the sick, wandering aimlessly about here and there, saluted, and seemed to look a little cheered. We heard one of them mutter: "No place for sisters". Marquees for two sisters each were up, but as someone had looted a brand-new cot, I personally spent the night on the earth. Classic it may be, but I am ready to certify that it was composed of volcanic rock, through which at intervals jagged lumps of lava pushed up in spots. The next several weeks were a time of acute misery, the main causes of which, we thought, might have been prevented. Sanitary conditions were appalling, food scarce and bad, heat great, small quantities of water had to be brought a long distance daily, till engineers had sunk wells in camp, tested and purified them, and this after two months had elapsed. A scant quart was all we could get to wash in, and it had to be used all day. The resourcefulness as usual of the Navy made the Camp tenable meanwhile. They rigged up a Condenser, which provided the only available moisture at hand. Our first patients with high temperatures were strictly limited for drinks, and often could not have even their faces washed for twenty-four hours. And the frightful plague of flies! With horror and disgust we recall them. We had cut off our sleeves for comfort and coolness, and arms were black with flies and bites. Six months later we still bore the marks of them, and the fleas and vermin which lived with us, apparently having evacuated the Greeks for a new diet. It was difficult to eat or drink without swallowing flies, the tables swarmed with them; every patient's dressing removed required another to stand by fanning vigorously, as a cloud of pests prepared to settle. Pus and maggots abounded and wounds would not heal. The Glory boys used to send us daily a large basket of cocoa, oatmeal, butter and bread, which undoubtedly saved our lives, and prevented the climate, infection, and the filthy surroundings on the Island from taking more toll than they did. It is a source of great regret to me that we never had a chance to do anything for the Navy, to which we owed so much, and which, more than any human factor, won the war. But presently the Glory departed on her lawful occasions, and it was realized the food question was an immediate essential problem. We were fortunate in having in the Unit an energetic and capable "Home-Sister", who, by dint of driving round the Island, discovering what could be obtained, visiting the liners in harbour, and getting a preliminary stock from them, (the old C.P.R. Empress of Britain was carrying troops to the east then) sending orders to Egypt and Malta, to

be delivered by next transport, etc. provided us by October with sufficient and palatable meals. On Christmas night we sat down to as good and festive a dinner as our respective home hospitals could have served in Canada. It was the one and only British Christmas celebrated on Lemnos.

To return to August; we had no time to adjust ourselves to any degree, when our services were asked for by an Australian Stationary Hospital, till our own tent lines should be opened. Only three M.O.s and seventeen of the personnel had escaped the ravages of the epidemic dysentery or enteric fever, and there were no sisters. There were some hundreds of patients, and when the C.O. met the ten Canadians sent, he admitted he didn't know where to tell us to begin. We each took a line, and proceeded to do what we could for the worst cases. Some were dying, some found dead. They lay on Egyptian wicker mattresses, about a foot high, almost all had an excreta vessel beside them, uncovered except for flies, a cup of water or canned milk here and there had been overturned by a restless sufferer, and the delirious were tormented by swarms of insects in a temperature of 100°. One of the orderlies, himself ill, came to my assistance, and we tried to do what little was possible for the temporary comfort of most. There seemed to be no linen, or there had been no time to unpack it, and the supplies of anything to draw on were nil. Food, as with us, was of the most meagre description, and totally unsuited to disease. An ambulance collected us in the late afternoon, and with one accord ten voices exclaimed: "Well, girls, we've struck the Crimea for sure." Next day, everyone who could walk was brought to one tent, and their dressings replaced as quickly as possible, to avoid increasing the fly evil. But shortly surgical supplies gave out, and the last day of our temporary duty, only one small square of bandage gauze could be laid on first, and the soiled upper dressing replaced over it, to which the wretched flies immediately returned.

I remember there were a dozen large nets made to cover a whole bed, intended to hang voluminously from a wooden ring in the (non-existent) ceiling, and meant to keep out mosquitoes and sandflies. The orderlies with good intentions had thrown them over the unconscious men, who almost smothered under the weight, and got entangled in the mesh. Some were already too soiled to use, but the rest I cut into squares of a yard or two, so that all could have some easily handled protection. While thus engaged, one of the Medical officers came in, and looking in incredulous dismay at my job, said reprovingly! "But, Sister, you know. . . beautifully made. . . have to account to stores . . . " etc. I informed him of the reason, said he could always attach the blame to a Canadian, and if he would draw up a confession then and there, I would sign it. He left, still worried. However I

thought of Florence Nightingale, breaking open the medicine cupboards, also I suppose “government property” for the time being, and felt sustained. Also I met some Australian Sisters later, and realized they would have treated red tape and the fly-nets in the same way, and sooner.

It was that day that I saw a Greek peasant cart go by. Some blanketed forms lay therein, their stiff feet protruding from the open end. At one and another tent, it halted and the dead were brought out. It was like the Great Plague of London without the clang of the bell. In October, deaths were so numerous that a burial party stayed at the cemetery all day, and fifty graves were dug every night. . . one of the most lugubrious occupations of the war, I imagine. Many died in the camps without ever being sent to hospital, because, to add to our distresses, there was at least one doctor on the Island, callous, indifferent and incompetent, revelling in a little brief authority. Where and why he received a commission to lower the ethics of his profession I do not know, but his name was anathema to the regimental camps, and revolting details were related to us. After the magnificent standard set in all services in France, it made us feel helpless, bewildered and disgusted, unable to cope with a situation of neglect outside our province, wasting much effort, cut off from headquarters, and with the actual base of supplies at the other end of a long sea voyage.

During the second week after our landing, our own lines were opened, 100 beds in each, and we received dysentery cases within twenty-four hours. It somewhat cheered us to have beds for the patients, and a certain amount of linen, and to start in an orderly manner again, although many articles had to be improvised or done without. Unfortunately much of our previous equipment had been forwarded to Abbéville, before orders were changed as to our destination. The morale of the men too was very different. They were sick, worn out, pessimistic, had none of the alleviations of the reserve areas on the western front, no leave, no sports, and no billets among friendly Allies. A few days’ rest however made a surprising change in most of them, but the food was always a vexed problem, and never adequate, and continued so to the end. I don’t know how any recovered strength on the diet.

Then one by one the Officers, sisters, and orderlies succumbed to dysentery, till only three out of thirty-five nurses were on duty in No 1. Canadians seemed to feel the change of climate particularly, but the lack of food, water, and the general environment was the determining factor. Everyone was temporarily or permanently poisoned at Lemnos. Shortly a considerable number of the first group had to be invalided to England, and

reinforcements replaced them. No. 3 suffered still more. They were situated half a mile away, on ground proved to be most unhygienic, an old Turkish war camp.

Within a few days of each other, their Matron and a sister fell victims to the scourge. As the little cortège of those well enough to attend followed the flag-draped coffins on wheeled stretchers, with the Sisters' white veil and leather belt laid on them, across the dusty, brown track, some of the patients in my ward were moved to tears. It always seemed a special tragedy to them that anything should happen to the sisters. At that date it was expected that other nurses would die, and on the sick returns being sent to the A.D.M.S., the order went forth that extra graves must be ready for eventualities. And, in addition to the fifty already referred to, a trench to hold six was dug in the Officers' lines. A laconic notice-board bore the legend: "For Sisters only." At the moment, as one of our Mess remarked, you could almost "pick the names of the six." But whether or not the hilarity with which the premature preparation was received cured our invalids I know not, but no more deaths occurred in the Canadian hospitals. Before we left the area two stone crosses were erected for the Sisters, and the men decorated the mounds with designs in white pebbles. So that there is in that desolate foreign Island, close by the Greek church, a corner that is forever Canada.

It must have been about the middle of November that one day I saw the men in an excited group round a patient who had retrieved a torn piece of a London paper from a belated parcel. Curses rent the air, and a dozen voices cried to me: "The swine have shot a sister!" "Oh no! unscrupulous as they are. . ." But the execution of Edith Cavell, of which we learned the particulars only a year later, was one of those impolitic acts of 'hate', which contributed so much to impress civilized public opinion among neutral nations, especially in America.

The nurses always subscribed to a Mess Fund to supplement rations, and the Mess Tent living room had by this time become a pleasant resort for Navy and Army Officers, French and English, at teatime. Authentic news of the war in the west was fragmentary, and far between, and papers from Canada, if and when they reached us, were over two months' old, so that we lost to a large extent the sequence of events in our isolation. But letters brought us news of the honour that had come to the profession in the selection of a Canadian Sister as co-nurse for His Majesty the King, after his accident in France, and both her fellow-graduates and the others were proud of the distinction.

Our first Australian and New Zealand patients came to us from a torpedoed troopship, the Southland. One afternoon we heard S.O.S. whistles in the harbour, and a commotion among the destroyers. The ship was struck not many miles outside, with seventy casualties. Fortunately aid was speedy, and many swam to the rescuing boats, while the rest awaited their turn, singing "Australia will be there" on the sloping deck, in the usual British way. The "Aussies" were delighted to meet Canadians, and from first to last all ranks were on the best of terms. It was amusing to note the "different" combination of military bearing with "Colonial" independence, (I had better hasten to say "Dominion") as contrasted with the discipline, "waiting-for-orders" attitude of the troops from Great Britain. These patients never "stayed put"; they were always up and doing something in the ward, and had to be counted when the M.O. made rounds. They were nearly all big fellows, their wide-brimmed hats and box-pleated uniforms adding to their bulk. They lacked army neatness and were irked by routine, but made up for it in hearty goodnature. Ex-patients from the Rest camps would visit us frequently; often a big hand would be thrust into a window, and a cheerful voice say: "Hello Sister, short of eggs, I suppose? Well, here are a few I picked up off the Greeks." 'Looted' was probably the translation of 'picked up', and I never enquired about stolen property, and they considered the island inhabitants more or less enemy.

Australians were very disgruntled at this time. They felt they had made some magnificent attacks, and would have more than once taken the defences of the Peninsula, if reinforcements had been available. Their natural impatience and impulsiveness assured them their deeds had been unnoticed, and their part in the war was to perish in a back-water. Wrathful individuals were all for "going home in the next boat, and not by way of England, either. No more Imperial wars! No more orders and regulations and rank, NO!!" But a year later, driving past Buckingham Palace, I saw the most vociferous of these dissenters clinging to the railings, hat askew, tunic unbuttoned, watching the changing of His Majesty's Guard, with every evidence of loyalty and enthusiasm. The more reserved New Zealanders were very English in their behaviour, most gentlemanly and appreciative patients, but amid their greater respect for authority, they shared the general disillusionment, and the fear that their best efforts in such a task set them would be discredited. They felt, rightly or wrongly, that they were of better calibre than some of the Territorial regiments they met, though they yielded to none in admiration of the 29th Division, and were sensitive lest the Dardanelles' fiasco be blamed on them. Also there were the Maoris, the native regiment, silent, remote men, some of them Oxford graduates. It was

perfectly true that reinforcements now being drafted to Gallipoli, such as a battalion of boys just released from the drill sergeant, and men who had been twice casualties in France, etc., were not of a sort to inspire as great confidence as their predecessors, for the first had no experience whatever, and the second were unequal to the physical strain.

Just about then I received a copy of a London paper with an editorial lauding the dash and war spirit of the "Anzacs". "Since the days of the Greek," it read, "no more gallant page of history had been written. There has never been a more marvellous series of episodes, and when we consider that the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was only recently raised, unversed in war, the wonder grows. Their impetuous rush, as they leaped ashore at Gaba Tepe, and drove the Turk before them with cold steel stirs the blood." I read this editorial in each of my three wards, and though the men pretended it was "rot" and they weren't interested, I believe they were considerably mollified and properly gratified. On the same date as Canadians were making their great stand at Ypres, Anzacs were storming these fortified steeps. It was a remarkable coincidence, and spectacular demonstration, contradicting for all time the prophecies of Kaiser and his kind. We were glad to welcome also some of the Newfoundland Naval Brigade, who felt much at home with us, and then and later won honour for their loyal and ancient British Island.

Sometime in October news leaked to Canada of our sorry plight, and lack of comforts for the men. The Canadian Government was communicated with, and a cable to London authorities had a quick reaction on Lemnos. The A.D.M.S. was instructed to inspect the hospital and redress disabilities. He happened to be one of those old-style officials (we did not meet many) who fully believed Colonials were still pioneers and "accustomed to roughing it", as he said. This remark let loose a fiery retort, and odious comparisons of living conditions, and he retired to digest the information offered. Things began to improve however, heat and flies were over, water supply adequate, latrines properly constructed, the Sisters had canvas collapsible huts erected for them with floors, and were issued portable coal-oil stoves. The health of the Unit returned to normal. The Canadian Red Cross also despatched boxes of gifts, which were doubly welcome as the weather grew colder. And a few more lanterns and candles, of which there had been a great shortage in the beginning, came to lighten our evenings.

Sisters on night-duty *sleeping* in the tents during the first months had some queer experiences. The flaps had to be tied back at each end for air. Marching men, service corps wagons, strollers from the camps, Egyptians

chanting weird choruses, Greek peasants with their little donkeys, water carts and road-makers passed continually. Bombing practice in the hills went on at intervals, and always somewhere it seemed, near or in the distance, coming or going, there echoed voices on the “long, long way to Tipperary.” There was no way of escape in the tents from bright light or noise. Once a man broke off from a route march, calling out for water, and stepped into our tent, which happened to be closest to the road. With consternation he fell back exclaiming, in an amazed voice: “My Gord!. . . Sisters!” Some sort of animal, half tall sheep, half camel, for it had a hump, used to wander in and out in flocks, and centipedes ten inches long were occasionally found in the beds, or under our boxes. That was very “active service” on the part of all concerned! Early in the morning several times a week reinforcements went off to the Peninsula, and long lines of khaki wound over the barren ridges from the camps in the hills. The Australians were always headed by their band playing “There’s a long, long trail a-winding. . .” The plaintive strains carried far, coming back faintly from the descent to the beach, as the last soldier disappeared over the skyline. It will never cease to be associated in my mind with the bleak landscape, the sound of rhythmic feet, the foreign land in which so many of these men put away their “dreams”, and the underlying ideal which had brought them all together.

An order sending sick officers to No. 1 in October caused some worry to the nursing staff. The only way to divide the tent lines was to suspend a tarpaulin at one end, merely curtaining off one or more cubicles of a sort. There were no fresh or extra supplies to equip a ward by this time, and all had to be treated alike. (A special Hut was later opened). Not that the officers demanded either more attention or better accommodation than their men, but the change from normal habits struck deeper, and we had no furniture of any kind, not even chairs. I well remember a Colonel of the M ——— who was satisfied with everything, and used to listen with amusement and interest to the comments on the war and things in general heard from the other side of the canvas. When well enough he used to stroll in quietly, and sitting on the foot of beds, discuss affairs with his own privates and others. He may have been a martinet on duty, but here there was only sympathetic consideration as man to man, rank obliterated. He was a fine gentleman, and the very best type of British officer of the Regular army. He was complimentary to the Sisters. “They are doing wonderful work under great difficulties. Something beyond the ordinary nurse—always seemed to know what helpful thing to say to each patient. It impressed me; in fact I have written home about it.”

Nearly everything needed from Medical Stores had to come from England, and required at least two months for delivery. There was also the matter of return of 'duplicate' forms that should have been made out in 'triplicate'!!! And we heard of some surgical needles carefully packed in the *hold* of a transport, which could not be obtained until the ship had gone up to the Peninsula and discharged guns on deck, and other large cases allotted elsewhere. All supplies indented for were cut to a minimum by someone higher up as if they had been for personal use, so that shortages were never made up.

The Convalescent Camps, unavoidably perhaps, were centres of dust storms, which combined with the heat, was most trying and unhealthy. There was practically no water to wash person or clothing, and one and a half pints of tea per day was all the liquid obtainable. True, the troops were marched to the shore, usually miles away from the camps, for bathing, but were equally dirty when they returned. As it was the practice of some hospitals to send patients to Convalescent Camps when they had only been one day out of bed, their weakened condition rendered one or more re-admittances inevitable for many men, and was uneconomic apart from other considerations. One outrageous scandal did come out into the light of day in November, after the rains and storms that then set in. It appeared that in most or all of the Camps there were no rubber ground sheets, the state of the men can be imagined, or probably not! *After* all these months, and the deluge that ensued, causing how many deaths from pneumonia no one knows, a large marquee which had been fastened up down by the beach for half a year was opened and the missing ground sheets found therein!! Perhaps the clean hospital suits of which there was such a lack were stored in another. The worst tale circulated was that of certain food ships, which after being unloaded for a week, left the harbour! And this at a time when thousands of lives were at stake, when thousands of idle men were occupied by squads in charge of officers laying out paths and decorating quarters with rows of white stones, and putting dabs of whitewash on grey ones for artistic effect! The fantastic and the futile could go no farther, and even the author of "Now it can be told" would have found language inadequate for description. An Australasian Editor of a leading journal was one of our patients. If he got his despatches through, they must have been vitriolic. The young son of the proprietor of one of the chief London papers was sent home from No. 1, with the hope that he might report to his father, but even if a public agitation had been possible, it was then too late to remedy conditions.

The colossal nature of the undertaking at Gallipoli, added to vast operations in other theatres of war for Britain, and the essential support of the battle-line in France and Belgium, threw such a burden as had never been known on the British people, and their unprepared military organization, which none of the other Allies had to sustain, and which for the Central Powers did not exist. As the task was performed with signal success against enormous odds in almost every area, it is common sense to assume that, in spite of mistakes of strategy, etc., now too well realized, that emanated from the War Office, it was the men on the spot at Lemnos particularly who were responsible for all the loss, failure and disintegration of every department. How they came to be concentrated there was the mystery. The soldiers singled out two or three in high places as chiefly culpable, but to us it appeared that a long list of heads should fall, and fall heavily.

A friend sent me some notes on Lemnos shortly after our arrival. Vulcan, cast out of Olympus, according to mythology set up his forge under Mount Therma. Herodotus wrote that its reputation was unsavoury. "The Island obtained a horrible notoriety throughout Hellas, and all actions of unusual cruelty were called Lemnian deeds." I find written in my diary below this extract, *History repeats itself*.

## THE LONG TRAIL

There's a long, long trail a-winding  
To the land of my dreams,  
Where the nightingales are singing,  
And a white moon beams.  
There's a long, long night of waiting . . .  
Till my dreams all come true,  
Till the day when I'll be going down  
That long, long trail with you.

STODDART KING

\* \* \* \* \*

Tell England, ye who pass this monument,  
We who died serving her, rest here content.

INSCRIPTION GALLIPOLI MEMORIAL

## IX

### EVACUATION. END OF A GREAT ADVENTURE.

The floods descended and the wind blew. It happened out of a clear sky in October. The vagaries of the climate had not been explained to us. Like a mile-wide cloud-burst the rain fell in sheets, and continued for hours. The water first coursed over the cement-like ground in swift cataracts where the camp sloped from the Officers' and Sisters' tents to the hospital lines. But presently it became a quagmire. Our rubber boots sank inches deep in the sticky soil, pounds of which attached itself to our feet. On harder spots the clay formed round our boots like a Canadian snow-shoe, and thus we slid down hill into deep puddles, and, after knocking off as much as possible, still carried lumps round all day. The marquees had no floors, tarpaulin having done duty in the dry weather. The flood swept through the wards from side to side, piling up when met by an obstruction. We had many wicker, foot-high cots as well as beds, and these were all but submerged, blankets ready to float off them. The hospital was a scene of muddy confusion, and at its worst nurses had to step *on* to the beds to give out medicines, carrying the *pint and quart bottles* that contained the Dysentery mixture! Trenches and channels were hastily dug by the orderlies, but as soon as the rain ceased the ground dried so quickly that the tarpaulins caked in humps and boulders of iron, and the gutters cut through the centre of the tents and between the beds had knife-like rims. We stepped into holes and from ridge to ridge as we went about our work for the rest of the time the canvas hospital was in use. A few days later a cyclonic wind storm struck the Island. Many of the nurses came off duty to find tents flat, beds overturned, and their possessions scattered far and wide. Some quite heavy articles were never seen again. It undoubtedly was a change from the September atmosphere.

Our Colonel decided that before another cyclone arrived he would move the whole outfit, lock, stock and barrel, into a hut hospital on higher ground. This had been built for No. 18 Stationary, (English) and was just ready for occupation, some fifty of Queen Alexandra's Sisters having recently arrived. I am not positive of the official story, but it was believed at the time that we moved first, and mentioned it to the Director of Medical Services afterwards, the authorities being taken by surprise, and No. 18 speechless! (Not altogether!) I met one of the M.O.s in Egypt later, and he still had comments to make on that 'flitting', and Canadian—— audacity! It was one

frightful day, for the transfer was hurried, and it would be impossible to count the number of miles covered back and forth, carrying everything to its place over the scarred and furrowed soil, and settling the patients by ten P.M. in some semblance of order. Though the new site was only a few hundred yards away, we now felt we had added to our experiences that of "refugees."

Each Sister after this had charge of a hut with about 45-50 patients, some of whom had been in bed six weeks, and could not regain strength for lack of proper food. To these were added some very sick cases, including Malta fever, which puzzled the doctors, till contact with that station was discovered. These men had very high temperatures, were delirious and violent. I remember one seized his knife and attempted to strike a sister in the back, but was prevented by the prompt action of an orderly. Some Indians were also sent to us for a few days by mistake, when they should have been taken to their own hospital. They were suffering from scurvy, could not speak a word of English, and refused food, except milk, so that the service we rendered them was small. Several cases of communicable diseases also lay at one time in a ward. It was remarkable that contagion did not spread.

We were farthest away from the harbour, and the hospital ships were so few and so full that sometimes a month elapsed without our being able to evacuate any. We never could fathom what the system was, if there was a system at all, in making up the lists. The largest vessels were being used, such as the Olympic and the Acquitania, which carried 3000 one trip, and yet ours seemed forgotten. It was generally admitted that the only chance for the very sick was to be evacuated to England, and yet more than once it happened that a number were taken down to the beach, lay there for hours, and then the ambulances, of which there were very few, brought them back, full of discomfort and despair. More than one died on the beach, or as a result of the ship's sailing without them. Of those who did go we heard from their comrades that many did not live to reach land. Once we had to keep sick men in hourly readiness lying on their beds dressed in uniform for two days, and then the order was countermanded! It was painful to witness their disappointment, as we had to break the news to them.

All the work on the Island was a heart-rending job, without a single redeeming feature, except that we knew we were rendering whatever comfort was in our power to these unfortunate victims of the apparent departmental *laissez-faire* that was Lemnos. Australian sisters when they arrived raged as we did, though they had not yet had opportunity to gauge

the excellent contrasting management in France. It was no longer possible to keep things even comparatively clean. There was no sending blankets to be fumigated, and laundry done by the Greeks with a minimum of water, was scanty and not much improved.

From November 1st to January 15th we were continuously busy, sometimes a convoy of patients arriving on stretchers before beds had been vacated, and they had to be provisionally put into the same, while the convalescents were laid on the floor, which doubled the regular work. Bathing facilities too scarcely existed for months. Then the orderlies used to carry two pails of water a day to a curtained recess at the end of the ward, and two men out of fifty in turn performed such ablutions as the supply afforded.

Men were sent in from the Rest Camps in a dying condition by one of the M.O.s already referred to, whose memory must live still in execrations. One of the most pathetic cases. . . . a fair-haired boy of twenty. . . . was carried in unconscious, and after stimulants, etc., the Doctor in our ward pronounced it was too late to save him. The boy had been lying on the ground in a tent for several days, and another soldier told us later that four dead bodies lay beside him. It is unbelievable, but it happened, for this was Lemnos. We asked if we could remove his filthy uniform, and at least let him die in a clean bed. We gave him a sponge by instalments, and he recovered sufficiently to speak a little. The other men were always so thoughtful when a very sick patient was admitted. They brought screens, fetched and carried away discarded articles, were ready to help when orderlies were busy, and talked in low tones. Before going off duty, I asked the lad if he wanted anything, if he was more comfortable? "O Sister," he whispered, summoning a faint smile: "*I'm in the pink!*" In the morning his bed was empty.

Our Non-coms, and orderlies worked extremely hard on this station, and of course suffered from illness like the rest. In the "Stationary" Hospitals with frequent moves they had a great amount of carrying stores and baggage to do, hard physical labour, often poor quarters, and sometimes scant meals in emergencies, but we did not hear them grumble.

Night-duty on Lemnos, for anyone who appreciated natural phenomena, was an unforgettable experience. I had read of "velvet darkness", and we had it there, even though the great starlit dome impended. But with not a light visible on the ground surface the gloom was hard to penetrate. We used to go to midnight supper at the mess tent, ten minutes' away, and often nearly stumbled over one of the military police resting by the road, unseen

except for a glowing cigarette end. His “Good-night, Sisters” always conveyed to us anew that sense of absolute confidence in the protection of the British army that was fully warranted. Not one of them but would have defended us with his life. There was a night-nurse to about 150 patients, and on nights of wind, thunder and rain, when hut doors were loosened from hinges, it was an adventure to make rounds outside, protecting lantern or flashlight as best we could. The huts had four-foot deep trenches dug on each side of them, with a two plank bridge. We sometimes stepped off the planks! Deaths were numerous, and often the measured tread of feet was heard along a path, and a torch revealed a blanketed form on a stretcher. Flashes of light on the eastern sky were surmised to be reflections of gun fire on the Peninsula, but there was intense silence. Dawn was exquisite. About 4.30 A.M., in the numerous camps in the hills, lights of the cooks’ fires would begin to twinkle, and Reveille echoed from hill to hill at 5. It started Greek donkeys braying and dogs barking in distant villages. The air was so clear and the rocky plain so devoid of obstruction, that one could see marvellous detail, and hear words nearly a mile off. The bare ridges and picturesque hamlets took on the most delicate green and rose tints, merging into a yellow and orange glow on Mount Therma, just before the sun burst above the horizon. After that everything faded to a uniform drab tone. The reflections in the bay were a symphony of colour. Some of the convalescents used to get up and come outside, gazing at this Ægean sunrise in awed silence. The moonlight of Greece on the vague outlines of the crowded harbour too afforded one of the most wonderful scenes that this or any war could have produced. By night one was not reminded that in the midst of all rode the *Aragon*!. . . but that only indirectly concerned the nursing service. (Aragon sunk a year later with loss of 610 lives.)

Our ex-patients always regarded the hospital as a Club, and paid us visits almost every evening. On every return from the Peninsula it was the first place they made for. It was hard not to be able to offer them hospitality as in France, but they knew they were welcome. One bad night I had allowed three men to take blankets and roll up on the floor, promising to call them at 4 that they could answer roll call at camp. They accepted with alacrity. There was a door at that end, seldom used, but the Colonel and Adjutant chose that night to visit each ward, and that door of entrance. Only one lantern hung in each long hut, but fortunately there was enough light to avoid stumbling over the three wayfarers. If the officers wondered at the overflow, no questions were asked, and the boys finished their sleep in peace. A walking convoy stumbled in one night exhausted, and were asleep the moment they lay down. Awakened for their morning wash, I noticed one

looking hard at the word ‘Canada’ on my shoulder strap. In a moment he sat up and called out: “I say, boys, we’ve got here!” It appeared former Australian ‘guests’ had recommended our ‘hotel’ to the Gallipoli public, and advised them to do their utmost to ‘wangle’ accommodation when needed.

Rumour was frantically busy at this time with the stagnation on the eastern front, while hardships of exposure to a winter campaign would work still more havoc among the depleted forces. In our first brief interlude of a cleared out ward, we could indulge in some exploratory walks on the Island. From Mount Therma Samothrace, Imbros and other isles of the northern archipelago were plainly visible. I have frequently seen in print that Rupert Brooke is buried at Lemnos, but he died in the harbour of Skyros, and his grave is in that “corner of a foreign field, forever England.” Failing to see any trace of Gallipoli, we went later in the week by boat to a hill at East Mudros, but with no better result. We had noticed a Greek slowly following at a fixed interval, and after awhile it became evident he was trailing us. As far as we could see there was nothing above on the crest, but the view. Just before we reached the skyline, he hurried past, and we heard voices a few yards ahead. There proved to be a French anti-aircraft post here, and a corporal came forward, saying to the Greek: “No, no, these are gardes—malades anglaises”. We had evidently been taken for spies. We sat down and talked to the gunners who had one of the most monotonous stations in the war, while it lasted. They were absolutely “fed up” with the east. One said: “I was a reservist in Canada, and was called up a year ago. I await with impatience the moment when I can return.” “Oh, what part of Canada?”, asked the writer, who hailed from Montreal. “Point St. Charles!”

Convalescent patients were sometimes allowed to remain an extra week or so to assist orderlies, and were eager to get the chance. One such I remember with gratitude. He was a miner from Lancashire, and had been dangerously ill from dysentery. Soon after getting up he had several weeks’ relapse. He was a raw-boned, rugged-faced man of perhaps forty-five, with a wife and six children, and as soon as he was strong enough, he worked like a navvy for us. He was always looking for a job, and was most trustworthy in the smallest details. Even on a rainy day, he would be seen with bucket and brush scrubbing out the office for the Sister, and much abashed at being caught doing it. Other huts had their ‘patient’ orderlies too, and as no more reinforcements were going to the Straits after November, we rejoiced that they would be rewarded by being ‘marked’ for home. With the unfathomable ‘hit or miss’ habit of some officials however, our man was suddenly scheduled to go back to his regiment, which might be sent anywhere, and the others who had been helping, to England. There were

usually means however, and with a little ‘technical’ help, we managed to keep M. . . . (of the Yorks & Lancs) another month, when his name appeared on the ‘invalided’ list instead of fit for duty. After much practice in dodging out of the limelight at least once a day, and I’m afraid nervous apprehension whenever the sergeant with his lists hove in sight, he at last shouldered his pack, and set out for the beach on foot an hour ahead of the ambulances. “You see, Sister, there might be some mistake again, and I just couldn’t stand it now, after writing the wife, and all.” He mailed us long letters from Alexandria, Malta, and Liverpool, where tropical diseases cases were held up for blood-tests and reports, but after more than two months’ delay, his wife arrived to visit him one Sunday, at the Liverpool Infirmary, and “Sister, when I see HER coming down the ward, it made a new man of me altogether.”

Then came Lord Kitchener’s arrival to decide upon future plans. On November 16th., the remnant of the 29th. Division, with the 10th. and other Units in reserve were drawn up on the plain below our hospital. We heard them cheering, and saw the sun glint on bayonets and the ‘tin-hats’ lifted on them. I knew “K” was always considerate of the men in the ranks, and hoping he might chance to glance into my huts, I posted on the door of each one the diet on which the patients existed. (Food supplies of course were dependent on general issue).

	Liquid Diet	Ordinary Diet
7.00 A.M.	Hot condensed milk	Tea, porridge, bread. (Breakfast)
10.00 A.M.	Rice-water	Bully beef, bread, rice. (Dinner)
12.00 noon	Barley-water	Bread, tea, plum & apple. (Supper)
4.30 P.M.	Condensed milk	
	Arrowroot, made with	
	Water. Tea.	
7.00 P.M.	Condensed milk	Cocoa, with traces milk.
		(Very small quantities)

But we only caught a glimpse of the great man as his car flashed past, Egyptians running beside the wheels of the ‘chariot’ of him, who in his day had been the most honoured ruler of that land since the era of Joseph. One of our ex-patients of the Worcesters came in that afternoon, and asked if we had seen the Field-Marshal. Following me confidentially into the office, he said in a puzzled way: “You know, Sister, ’E said a funny thing ’E said as

'ow we were 'eroes!" "But didn't you know you were heroes?" "Well. . . . I suppose we didn't just think about it." (I told him what we thought) "'E said they was talking about us at 'ome." Such simplicity, such modest self-estimation brought tears to my eyes. Humble, happy warriors.

Evacuation was in the air, though no definite news leaked out of that midnight withdrawal from the ill-fated Peninsula, which was carried out so splendidly, on December 20th. Anzac Cove and Suvla were deserted at dawn, and the year's effort abandoned. The first intimation we had was a long, slow column trailing behind the hospital to the camps. Men were falling out of the ranks, throwing off equipment, sinking prone in their sheepskin coats, looking exactly like the fauna of the Island. We had begun to feel that nothing else mattered if they only got off safely, and the miracle of "no casualties" had been too much to hope for. It was now confirmed that the beginning of the end was close. Hospitals began to cut down capacity, strike tents and dismantle huts, but rumour lagged for the first and only time. No one had the heart to invent or anticipate what the next move might lead to, and when our orders came to pack, and gradually hut after hut was cleared, we could only think of the lonely cemeteries we were leaving behind, robbed of the glamour of victory.

It was an ironic circumstance that No. 27 Imperial General Hospital, just ready for patients in December, was never opened on Lemnos. It was a well built and extensive series of excellently laid-out wards, offices, dispensary, etc. and even had one real, full-size porcelain bath-tub, if not more, installed! It was a sight for the natives to look at,—an alien and unbelievable triumph of skill and luxury for Lemnos! On the 9th. January the final evacuation took place off Cape Helles. Thirty-two of the Newfoundland Regiment were honoured as rearguard to remain in the trenches, and rifles and flares continued to go off at intervals. But it was recognized the element of surprise would not serve, and the rearguard were thought doomed. The Turks would be apt to take toll for their former napping. But they proved sportsmen. Our men said they stood four ranks deep on a narrow strip of beach which could have been enfiladed from the heights with great slaughter. Not a shot was fired however. The Turks had called across the hill the previous day: "Good-bye. We know you're going. So are we. Good luck!" Whatever their cruelties to prisoners in Turkey, and their historic reputation, on the Peninsula they were a decent foe. They cared for British graves, and there was no atrocities. Of the 32 who had been dedicated to an almost certain fate, all escaped, and only one accidental casualty occurred. A Sergeant of the Gloucesters broke an arm during the stealthy retreat down

the cliff in the darkness, after the main embarkation was completed, and I had the pleasure of seeing “the last casualty off” in my ward.

On January 28th. Nos. 1 and 3 Canadian left the desolate camp sites, the grey hills sinking back once more into isolation, bereft of their military population, and amid loading transports in the fast-emptying harbour, boarded the Hospital ship, Dover Castle, for Egypt. Our group of Sisters was composed of nurses of different temperaments, differing ages, outlook, and ambitions, but it is to their credit that I never heard one say she was sorry to have served on Lemnos. “That was real ‘active service’”, they said. “We were very badly needed there.” In fact it was acknowledged to be the worst station in the war, except the hardships incurred on the tragic Serbian retreat. One of our group composed some verses which reflected our mood very well:

Rugged little Isle of Lemnos  
In the blue Ægean Sea,  
We have cursed you, but we like you  
    Just the same.  
And when mists of time obscure you,  
And we’re scattered far and wide,  
I am sure that we shall love to  
    Hear your name. . . .

We were sick and we were lonely,  
We were ‘fed up’ with no food,  
We were dirty, we were dusty,  
    We were sad;  
But we stuck it out together,  
And we tried to be polite,  
And be thankful for the things  
    We never had. . . .

Through the fly-time, and the dust-time,  
Through the bleak and winter days,  
War-defying, living, dying  
    With a will,  
Men of Lemnos, when we scatter,  
And the tide of time rolls by,  
Ever green will be the memory  
    Of you still. . . .

Fare you well, old Isle of Lemnos,  
With your mingled memories,  
With your wind-storms, and your dust-storms,  
    And your rain,  
With your hundred campfires burning,  
And your harbour toward the South,  
You have sheltered Britain's forces  
    Just the same.

(C.E.B.)

And so the curtain fell for all of us on that sombre tragedy that so barely, at several moments, failed of success. All the attendant circumstances will never be known. The film "Tell England" struck some authentic and haunting notes of desperate assaults and superhuman endurance. But on Lemnos, where never a British foot shall tread, except to tend the graves, "the rest is silence". Behind the memorials that mark the bleak headlands of the Peninsula must forever brood the shadow of a gigantic IF!

## REQUIESCANT

In lonely watches of the night,  
Great visions burst upon my sight,  
Far down the stretches of the sky.  
The hosts of dead go marching by.

Strange ghostly banners o'er them float,  
Strange bugles sound an awful note,  
And all their faces and their eyes  
Are lit with star-light from the skies.

Dear Christ, Who reign'st above the flood  
Of human tears and human blood,  
A weary road these men have trod,  
O house them in the home of God.

REV. CANON FREDERIC G. SCOTT.

*Chaplain First Division C.E.F. Ypres.  
(by permission).*

## X

### 1916. CAIRO IN THOSE YEARS.

Three years before I had hoped with luck to be in Egypt in 1916, and here I was in very exceptional circumstances, on February 1st. Disembarking at Alexandria, we travelled in a long, white hospital train to Cairo, and were housed in the palatial Semiramus Hotel, taken over by the British Government, solely for the use of Sisters. It was one of the German erections, intended, like political near-east schemes, to defy competition when the Kaiser's domination of Egypt and Palestine became an accomplished fact. The Union Jack now floated over it, as it did later over the "Palace" on the Mount of Olives, and German 'preparedness' proved of good use to the Allies more than once! The Semiramus stands on the banks of the Nile, near the British Residency, and opposite the Kaiser-el-Nil Bridge, which at intervals is raised to let a picturesque procession of native boats, with their tall sails, variously coloured, pass through. A slow-moving, kaleidoscopic crowd of sheiks, camels, loaded to a width of six feet, silk-clad pedestrians, mules, white-uniformed native police, and the khaki of the British garrison, mingled colour and movement.

The main streets are very modern, resembling Paris at night, long, straight, well-lighted; clean, tall cream-coloured houses, innumerable private cars and taxis are for the wealthy, and the ladies of the harem drive in beautifully appointed carriages, looking out from behind white silk veils at the animated life they cannot share. The peasant women, always in dusty black, with a black crepe yashmak, carry huge jars on their heads, and more often than not, a brown infant slung in a shawl on their backs. We had seen the filthy mud villages on the way from Alexandria, with refuse thrown on the roof sprouting, so that their domestic animals wandered up to nibble at it, and marvelled that in such a hot country, plague was not epidemic. The creaking water wheels, the frightful state of beggars on the pavements, the Bazaars and the Mosques were a new world to Canadians, but the climate at its best. Egypt was again linked with the momentous events on a world-wide scale, and the upheaval brought uniformed men and women flocking to her ancient cities, and ships thronging the Canal.

The first night of our arrival however the marble halls of the Semiramus meant to us BATH ROOMS and HOT WATER, and surely old Father Nile must have recorded a drop in his level the night the Canadians came to

town. The personnel of No. 5 Stationary, now No. 7 General, established in the Cavalry Barracks at Abassiah, were met again, and experiences exchanged. In April they returned to England and France. On February 28th. No. 1 was despatched to Salonika, where they suffered from malaria and went through further hardships for eighteen months having among their patients refugees, and the inhabitants who were victims of bombing raids. They were then assigned to Hastings, and enjoyed a well-earned change in another historic but more salubrious spot. At Salonika also were Nos. 4 and 5 Canadian General Hospitals, and No. 7 Stationary (Dalhousie University) which were commended for their excellent work.

Having by this time become a casualty myself, I was left behind, to my keen regret, in the Anglo-American Hospital on Gezirah Island, converted, like everything else, to war uses. An avenue of trees with great scarlet flowers led to it, and the encircling Nile made for coolness at night. But in May at 6 A.M. the temperature was 100°, all windows and doors were closed till after sunset, and there were not the punkahs and other facilities for making the heat bearable as in India. The hospital was staffed at that time by five New Zealand Sisters and one Australian, wearing British Territorial uniform. Their training in the N.Z. hospitals seemed to be very thorough, and they were excellent professionally. They afterwards went to Bazra in hospital ships to take on patients from the disaster at Kut, to India, and on many vessels to repatriate their own soldiers. We met two years later and dined together in London, and after sixteen years still correspond.

Many kindnesses from members of my own Unit, English sisters as well as the Australasians, and from English and Australian doctors belong to this period, also from a Canadian Medical Officer attached to an Imperial Unit. Americans who had a Mission School at Heliopolis, and others who had escaped from Turkey in British ships, were eager and willing to acknowledge the protection of the Union Jack, and had no illusions as to what the U.S.A. *ought* to do. They were anxious to adopt a Canadian derelict. Here is a rhyme received one day, with other proofs of good will in tangible and edible form; unobtainable elsewhere:

“If there’s a dear lady who feels blue to-day  
Because all her ‘sisters’ are sailing away,  
Just let her ‘chirk’ up and be cheerful once more,  
There are ‘second epistles’ strewn thick round her door.  
‘Second Epistles’ and what may they be?  
Why, Yankees, of course, from the land of the free!  
And they hope that this sister left here all alone  
Will feel that they’re second indeed to her own.  
They are hers to command both by night and by day  
As long as she has in this strange land to stay.  
And they hope when she feels the least bit of need,  
She’ll send for one of them with the utmost speed.  
Or if it’s a magazine, paper or book,  
From over the sea at which she would look,  
To the College for Girls let her send but a line,  
And they will be round the next morning at nine. . . .”

Some of the cosmopolitan roving population of the famous city of the Pyramids was of course absent during the war years, but from the terrace at Shepherd’s, the pictorial review of the British Empire that passed every few minutes, was a study in geography, and military insignia. It will never again see the like, unless, as many think, the next and final war will take place in the eastern Mediterranean and Palestine. But on which side will Egypt then range herself? The Pyramids themselves I visited twice. Once. . . . only once!. . . . on a camel. Some profess to like this mode of transportation. I don’t! I was not quite settled in the clumsy and unclean saddle, when the beast had a convulsion on the left (or right) front corner. I dived to the other side, clutching the pommel wildly, but before I was righted, a plunge and a kick on the off hind leg all but unseated me. Another heave at the front, and a final disjuncting of the remaining leg, completed the uprising. Mounting a camel is an acquired habit, and I decided then and there not to acquire it! The beast was up, turning to leer at me, its protruding eyes rolling, lips drawn back, and long yellow fangs within an inch of my knee. I never liked camels in a circus, and I liked them. . . . especially this one. . . . no better in their native habitat. The dragoman’s son, a youth of twelve or so, began to walk nonchalantly ahead, allowing the reins to droop gracefully over his shoulder, while I had visions of myself being borne swiftly and smoothly (so *some* say) across the desert, in the general direction of the Victoria Nyanza. I intimated to my boy that there would be no baksheesh unless the camel was led properly, (at this moment the brute again lunged at my boot) and told in his own language *not* to do that.

We then rode, uneasily on my part, round that marvellous chief wonder of the world, the greatest though the oldest of the works of man, the Great Pyramid. I did not understand then as much as I do now about the unique interior and its mysterious system of passages, or would have had a far deeper thrill. Mena House was full of uniforms, an Australian camp was pitched near by, and khaki figures, aided by natives, climbed up or down the enormous stones composing the sloping sides. It was impossible at the time to go inside, and comparatively few women have done so, but to have been beside it, and not to have seen its chambers, is a real and lasting deprivation. I think however that one should visit the Pyramids by moonlight, and only with a select group. There was too much modern rush about, apart from the war, to accord with its ageless solemnity. The second time I rode on a small donkey, which insisted on making for a foot of shade near the Sphinx, and then sat down suddenly as a hint for me to get off. It was 8 A.M. and 115° in the shade; the air scorched our eyelashes, but we saw the Sphinx. Intensely interesting it is, but the traveller who called it beautiful, exaggerated!

More impressive, because unexpected, was that lonely obelisk in a ploughed field at Heliopolis, undisturbed since first its shaft was raised at an unknown date in the priestly city of On. Its base is more than 15 feet below the present level. Tradition says it remains there of a trio, the others now being on the Thames Embankment, and in Central Park, N.Y. A guide took us across the Nile within the Cairo city limits, on a flat scow, propelled as in centuries past, to see the famous 3000 year old Nilometer. At the upper end of the Island of Rhoda is a spot pointed out as that where Moses was found, this being the garden of Pharaoh's daughter. A fair-sized tree of unfamiliar species hung over the sand. "Is that a bulrush?", we enquired, facetiously. The guide made a rapid calculation as to credulity and baksheesh, and agreed emphatically: "Yes, yes, bulrush!"

Of how we went underground to the Coptic church, which they believe was the shelter of the Holy Family for a year, saw, at Matariah, the well of sweet water (all others are brackish) touched by the infant Christ, drove by the site of Joseph's granaries, still a threshing-floor, were admitted, because Sisters had the entrée during the war, to the great Mohammedan University of Al-Azhar, climbed the decaying steps of the Mosques, were given a chair on the sacred carpet under the dome of Mehemet Ali, and saw that entrancing spectacle, sunset over the desert from the citadel, belongs to another story. The exotic sights and perfumes, the Muezzin at noon from the minarets, the acres of stone cemeteries and wayside tombs, the huge rubbish mounds, relics of five former cities on this site, alabaster slabs and columns made from the despoiled Pyramids, tiled pavements of temple courts, and

the narrow, dark purlieus of the Mouski, which always seemed to have an indefinite suggestion of evil, were more than the eye or mind could assimilate in the cursory tour time allowed us. A native funeral, with its weird, wailing women, was often met, but the military element, especially the big Australians riding, with knees drawn up, the small donkeys, crowded the streets to the exclusion of much that was Egyptian. We were amused at the state of the straw shoes that 'infidels' must don before entering the Mosques. Very few had any soles remaining, so that much 'desecration' was also due to the war! One of the stories that originated here in 1916 has as much truth in it perhaps as jest. An "Aussie" speaks: "Tourists in future no doubt will be told that the 'wild Australians' damaged the Pyramids and knocked the nose off the Sphinx, when they invaded the country in 1915." Anglo-Egyptian: "Probably, but if not, the Australians themselves will say they did it!"

The Prince of Wales came one day "incog." from Italy, and every thing was to be most informal and private. But someone officiously threw open the great Royal doors of the station, and the secret was out. It was noticeable that men and women from other parts of the Empire did not know how to treat the natives with that indescribable mixture of *benignant aloofness* (it is difficult to describe) learned by Great Britain in centuries of administration of other Races and Religions. The natives understand it perfectly, and it is not really a barrier. Limitations are mutually recognized, and not overstepped. Many among the Overseas' forces did not comprehend the 'manner', and it was sometimes unfortunate. Egyptians and others expect dignity in all the British. The Soudanese are a much finer type of humanity than the Egyptians; great, ebony, good-natured, biddable children, always grinning, willing and loyal. The Arabic language seemed the most musical I had ever heard, soft syllables like *arabieh* and *dahabieh* tended to melodious conversation, and a few words conveyed all required information. But my impression of the Egyptians on the other hand was of a mysterious, furtive, evasive scheming people, always ready to double-cross their benefactors, the British. I can never think of them without seeing their robed and turbanned figures slinking into the obscure alleys of the Mouski, investing even legitimate business with an air of conspiracy. The information acquired during three months in Cairo, the unhappy tales of mixed marriages, and events since have more than confirmed this view. A little printed sheet about twelve inches by eight containing official communiqués was all the war news we got. In the age-old fashion of native races, the tidings of the nasty little affair at El Arish were known in the Bazaars 12 hours before British despatches.

When the sudden and enormous influx of casualties occurred after the first attack on the Cape, and disease was rampant, all suitable buildings were overflowing, and no extra nursing service ready. English and French ladies volunteered to fill the gap before trained women arrived. One volunteer was given the task of night-duty among the officers in the semi-civilian, cottage-hospital, the Anglo-American. Amid confusion, lack of head or army organization, inadequate stores, emergencies when there was no authority to appeal to, she carried on in the best British tradition till relieved. "I gave them drinks, applied whatever 'first-aid' I knew, made them as comfortable as means permitted, and hoped for the best", she said. She was then in charge of a house for the nurses, managing the house-keeping machinery, and native servants, and here and in England every member of her family was engaged in public service in some way connected with the war, as was the case in the vast majority of homes in Great Britain. It was weeks before the totally inadequate number of nurses in the Cairo citadel and improvised hospitals was augmented. One Territorial Sister, arriving at 'Alex' at 7 P.M., was detailed to go on night-duty at 8, and the sister she relieved fainting, before she could give her any details, she was left alone. The new-comer found herself in a huge barracks where 800 men lay, more or less neglected, through no fault of the exhausted staff. Of this number perhaps 200 were bed patients, and as the nurse went from ward to ward, she found the M.O.'s books with a plethora of night orders written up! (This sometimes occurred too in France, when certain doctors expected the inherently impossible, just as though in a well-equipped city hospital, with a tenth of the patients). There were half a dozen orderlies, several of whom were Egyptians. Some she never saw, and one was found asleep under the bed of a delirious patient he was supposed to guard. One man who had had an abdominal section the day before, was discovered sliding down the staircase. Moans and calls for water echoed in the corridors. I have often thought Scutari, sixty years earlier, offered nothing worse than this.

Another hospital ship—headed west this time. We spent an hour in the harbour of Malta, packed with French and English ships, and native small boats, and from the deck, watched the black-robed throngs mounting and descending the streets of steps. The masked batteries of Valetta would have blown up everything in sight I imagine. The troopships and destroyers and camouflaged tramps still surrounded us, but not in such great numbers, and one could sense an air of relaxation in the atmosphere. Gibraltar was reached on May 26th, Queen Mary's birthday, and from 1200 feet above the Royal Standard floated in her honour. It is extraordinary what varied shapes the

Rock assumes as one approaches from the east. And the girdle of fortifications, seen and unseen, has always made this naval and military fortress a symbol of British strength and prestige. We headed out of the Strait towards evening, and were in the vicinity of Trafalgar at sunset, that noble setting which inspired Browning's sonnet. Here in sight were all the localities so touched with significance of past glory, and so full of meaning for those in the service of the Empire in those later years:

“Sunset ran one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay. . . .  
Here and here did England help me.  
How shall I help England? Say!”

## THE SILENT SERVICE.

. . . Oh, well do England's Admirals know  
The song of the sea, as they outward go  
Across the world from Scapa Flow  
    Keeping the sea lanes free.  
Freedom of heart and freedom of hand,  
Freedom by sea and freedom by land,  
Freedom to her farthest strand,  
    As long as the sea shall be.

“Song of the Sea.”  
HELEN DURIE, Canada.  
*(by permission.)*

## MY COUNTRY

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above . . . .  
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;  
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price;  
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.  
And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,  
Most dear to those that love her, most great to those that know;  
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,  
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are Peace.

SIR CECIL SPRING-RICE.  
*Ambassador to U.S.A. in war.  
Died in Service of his Country.  
(Also the voice of the brother-soul of Lord Kitchener)*

## XI

### ONE BLACK WEEK. JUTLAND AND KITCHENER.

It was on the morning of May 31st. that the “Goorka” docked, and unknown to everyone the greatest sea fight for 110 years was about to open. The British and German fleets were steaming towards each other only a few miles away, as the crow flies, and as Canada counts miles. While Britain slept that night, the North Sea was throbbing with terrific forces, and the long vigil at Scapa Flo’ was practically over.

Arrived at Waterloo Station, a fussy R.A.M.C. officer insisted, in spite of protests, that I was listed as a stretcher case, and as a stretcher case I must leave the train. Therefore I found myself in full uniform being carried up a steep stairway by a detachment of the St. John’s Ambulance Brigade. In their black dress, three on each side, I reflected that it was the nearest I was likely to come to seeing my own funeral. A few days were spent in a Theological College at Millbank (commandeered, as were Oxford and Cambridge, for war derelicts). It was filled with Sisters from all quarters of the Empire and from all fields.

Once more I was able to note the difference that another year had made in the London to which I never return without added pleasure and a more intimate affection. The streets were quite black at night now, everyone was grim, silent and overworked. Things were not going well that Spring. Almost every family in the land had lost one, or two, or three, many their all. Canteens at the stations were open twenty-four hours, staffed by untiring V.A.D. workers, who also were actively engaged in France; women in every sort of uniform were taking the places of men; Kitchener’s army had justified its training and its patriotism (though it takes longer to make an officer than a soldier in the ranks); young ladies of social degree were washing dishes and scrubbing floors in hospitals, and driving military cars everywhere. Air-raid damage had been considerable, and spaces were hoarded off here and there in a clever way. St. Martins-in-the-Fields had made itself a soldiers’ club and lodging-house, and the Beaver Hut on the Strand was a great rendezvous for Canadians.

Red and gold chevrons told their own personal story. C.A.M.C. headquarters on Oxford St., the Red Cross on Cockspur, and the Embankment offices were all working overtime, friends were unexpectedly

met on corners, and Canadian clients swamped the Bank of Montreal in Waterloo Place. Many more Canadian Hospitals were in being, fleets of ambulances had been donated, and Dominion invalided men were to be found all over the country. The Maple Leaf Clubs were a boon to many Canadian soldiers. Canadian women in London, headed by Lady Drummond, did extremely important and unceasingly onerous work of a widely varied character, for five full years. Besides the Red Cross and I.O.D.E. activities, there were Comforts for prisoners in Germany, and a 'Missing' Bureau; Visiting parties and entertainments for hospitals; arrangements for Canadians on leave or convalescents in the city; supply depot, and gift boxes; extra equipment for ambulances, Beaver Hut Canteen, and a hundred other details and jobs. "They were days when we really lived", wrote one of the busiest.

Then, four days after it had taken place, the morning papers carried the news of the Battle of Jutland, or rather that bald announcement from the First Lord of the Admiralty that five of the most powerful battle cruisers had been sunk, a list of other losses, and *nothing* about the main Grand fleet, or the Germans. The startling headlines, special editions, and a guarded editorial or two all seemed ambiguous, as if some worse news were to follow. The next day a clearer statement was published, and the people breathed again. For an army is an emergency possession to Britain, no matter how proud they may be of their Guards, their Highlanders, and military ceremonies. But the "Fleet of England is her all in all", (Even Ramsay Macdonald has been forced to acknowledge "the sea is us") the only possible defence of a world-wide Empire founded on the sea. Surely among the most dramatic and fateful moments in all history were those just after midnight of Aug. 4-5, 1914, when from the Admiralty flashed the one-word signal "Go", and 317 men-of-war, ready for their secret battle-stations, replied "Off"!

Though the silent and unseen ships had been veiled in the mists of the North Sea for nearly two years, the nation never doubted they were ready for "The Day", so the cruiser losses without details created dismay till it was known the Grand Fleet was cruising ready for action again in 24 hours, and there filtered through various reports of the damage done to the enemy, of mutiny on the lower deck; and the ultimate, unexpected result that the High Seas' Fleet never again came out of harbour till the great hour of surrender, proved British victory. "In the World War again, as at the time of the Armada and Napoleon, the British Navy decided everything". (the late Prof. Wilhelm Dibelius, Berlin, in his book "England")

The plain memorial shafts, bearing 7000 names at Plymouth, 8000 at Portsmouth, and 9000 at Chatham commemorate these naval heroes, and others in every ocean “who have no known grave but the sea.” A great memorial service took place in St. Paul’s Cathedral on June 14th, a Requiem for the brave departed, the “sure shield” of the land.

The second heavy blow fell six days later with the brief War Office statement of Lord Kitchener’s death. Surely rarely has a nation had two such shocks in a week. Throughout the war in good or ill fortune up to the Armistice I never saw the people moved out of their ordinary demeanor, but Kitchener’s loss stunned them. No leader was ever more trusted by the army or the Empire, and they knew the tremendous task he had undertaken—to transform civilians in two years, in the midst of the world’s greatest war, into an army of victory over a foe whose every preparation was made, and four million human machines on the march.

Together with articles that belonged to Lord Kitchener in the United Services’ Museum, may be seen a letter from a German officer, in which he states his belief that England has not yet fully appreciated what he did, and that he was incomparably the greatest man the war produced. In the crowded streets that day every class and age had a paper, and read it where they stood. Horses, motors and buses stopped while passengers and driver snatched a sheet. The newsboys were silent; no cries were necessary. I did not hear a word spoken; each forgot his neighbour, and remembered only the strong, taciturn, typically British patriot, whose loss was irreparable. On a nearby roof someone began to lower a flag to half-mast. The immobility was broken, buses moved on, pedestrians resumed their interrupted way, but one personality only absorbed all thought.

Tickets were sent to the Canadian Nurses’ Hostel for the Memorial Service at St. Paul’s, on June 13th. Personally, I had never had a chance when in London to see any of the great war spectacles, and was again unlucky, for two of us who had been serving abroad were not considered worthy of these, which were appropriated by nurses who had been long in London, and had received many other privileges! On the principle that they who have had, shall have more, apparently. I went however to the reserved windows of a building in the churchyard, saw Their Majesties enter, the Queen in deep mourning, expressing in their grave faces heartfelt regret for one of the truest friends of the Royal family. Pictures of the Field-Marshal were framed in crape everywhere, and scarcely ever had so many flags drooped motionless at half-mast. The black-clad thousands respectfully bared their heads or bowed to the Royal carriage, at one in their grief, and a

pall of sadness descended on the multitudes as they awaited the return passage of the Sovereigns. The Government, Parliamentarians, diplomatic representatives of the Allies, detachments from home-defence regiments, soldiers on leave, men in the hospital blue, and many Sisters streamed through the great west doors. Lord Kitchener, like many of the leaders of the Allied armies, was a truly religious man—a loyal son of the national church, and as very faintly through some side exit came the blurred notes of a band rendering:

“Now the labourer’s task is o’er,  
Now the battle day is past,  
Now upon the farther shore  
Lands the voyager at last,”

never had funeral hymn seemed so appropriate. A few notes of the Last Post quivered forth in salute to him whose grave remains unknown. Every Cathedral, thousands of churches, and military depots held services at the same time, so that the whole nation revered his memory in common. It was a time to sustain the courage in spite of deepening difficulties, and voicelessly the people determined to keep faith with him; a faith and a vision that a poet expressed in inspired language:

“How was it then with England?  
Her faith was true to her plighted word;  
Her strong hand closed on her blunted sword;  
Her heart rose high to the foeman’s hate;  
She walked with God on the hills of Fate;  
And all was well with England.

\* \* \* \* \*

“How is it now with England?  
She sees upon her mist-girt path  
Dim, drifting shapes of fear and wrath;  
Hold high the heart.  
Bend low the knee.  
She has been guided, and will be,  
And all is well with England.”

—(Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)

The fortunes of the stubborn struggle on the Somme—“the most prolonged battle in all history”—swayed back and forth for seven months of

this year, 1916, without decisive result, except to fully demonstrate the “staying power” and man-to-man ascendancy of “Kitchener’s armies” and the Empire Contingents. The Allied supremacy in the air was however no longer in doubt, and British artillery by supreme efforts had caught up with the French in numbers and mobility, so that after two years a combined offensive on a great scale became a possibility. But the delay inscribed thousands of names on the ever-mounting casualty lists.

“They fell undaunted and undying,  
The very winds their fate seem sighing;  
The waters murmur of their name,  
The woods are peopled with their fame,  
The meanest rill, the mightiest river  
Rolls mingled with their praise forever.”

(Col. W. H. James in the Times’ History of the War)

## ENTER THE U.S.A.

The year 1917 furnished several bright spots amid stern fighting.

The United States decided to enter the war and pull her weight in a struggle, which concerned all nations of good will, and meant a great deal more in moral values and results than in material gain. Canada captured Vimy Ridge, and won fresh battle honours.

American Editorials on 2nd Battle of Ypres, and Vimy Ridge. "Well Done, Canada.

"Every American will feel a thrill of admiration and a touch of honest envy at the achievement of the Canadian troops about Arras on Easter Sunday and the following day. The glory of the Canadian fight in the Ypres' Salient has been too little appreciated on our side of the northern frontier. Rarely in history have troops, volunteer troops, had to bear a more terrific blow than that which followed the first gas attack. Yet the Canadian volunteers stood and died as the British Regulars had stood and died in the greater battle of Ypres of 1914. And now the Canadians have swept up the famous Vimy Ridge, which halted the veterans of Foch. They have had the opportunity to write the name of Canada on the war map of Europe, and their imprint will be remembered. For Canada the value will be no less than for the British Empire. The Germans had prepared for the downfall of that Empire. Their spies had laboured everywhere, and had forecast the secession of the Dominions. . . . In seeking to destroy the Empire the Germans have consolidated it. . . Americans will feel a certain envy in the thought that Canada has outdistanced us in reaching the battle-line, which is the frontier of our common civilization. No praise of the Canadian achievement can be excessive. Canada has sent across the sea an army greater than Napoleon ever commanded on any field; her regiments have shown the same stubborn and tenacious quality which is the glory of the British people. . . Our entrance into the war should make a new bond between ourselves and Canada. . . It remains for the United States to do its part in the common cause." New York Tribune.

## VIMY

“Canada has a new reason for pride. It was great good fortune for her that the taking of Vimy Ridge, for which the Allies had poured out so much blood, fell in the long run to her. April 9th, 1917, will be in Canada’s history one of the great days, a day of glory to furnish inspiration to her sons for generations. Her new Ally salutes her, and rejoices with her.”

New York Times.

An American lawyer, McDougall Hawkes, speaking in Canada, 1916: “I have never in all my life felt so much admiration for anything as I do (being a citizen of the U.S.A.) for the British army. I do not believe that there is in all history such a sequence of events as has taken place since the war began. Great Britain was indulging in the arts of peace and did not wish harm to any nation. But when war was forced upon her there arose one of the greatest powers the world has ever seen, the admiration of everybody, ready to fight for right and justice. Canada is making world history, and your men are doing things that will leave their imprint upon the old world as well as the new. . . . As an American citizen I feel that you are fighting our battles, in the armies of Great Britain, and 80 percent of Americans feel the same. When the war is over we will feel that you have saved the United States, just as much as our soldiers saved the Union. The interests of the U.S. in my judgment are bound up with the issue of this war as much as yours. It is not proper for me to criticize the Government of my country, but I think it is perfectly proper to say that it is a matter of deepest regret that we did not protest the violation of Belgium.”

## ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

But perhaps the greatest event of all was the deliverance of Jerusalem on December 9th, by General Allenby, after centuries of oppression. The “Romance of the Last Crusade” held a special interest for the British Race, and a Thanksgiving service was immediately held in the Abbey.

## AMERICA TO ENGLAND.

O England, in the smoking trenches dying  
For all the world,  
We hold our breath and watch your bright flag flying  
While ours is furled.

We who are neutral; (yet this lip with fervour  
The word abjures)  
O England, never name us the time-server,  
Our hearts are yours.

We who so glory in your high decision,  
So trust your goal . . . .  
All Europe in our blood, but yours our vision,  
Our speech, our soul.

Alice Corbett, U.S.A.

*in the Observer, London.*  
(by permission.)

## XII

### 1917. BUXTON IN A DARK HOUR.

A brief sojourn at No. 16 Canadian General Hospital (Ontario) Orpington, Kent, specially planned for its task, and pleasantly situated to provide sun, air and quiet surroundings for convalescing patients, offset the nightmare of Lemnos. Enemy airships passed over us several times, but did not waste any bombs intended for London.

Thence to beautiful Buxton, whose Spa hotels and many dwellings were filled with 5000 Canadian soldiers, awaiting transport home. The remnants of the first year of the war were there, many amputation cases, and permanently unfit. A hydro and massage therapy had been established, and the town was for the time being a Canadian resort. Here was entire and healthful change of scene to all. The high moors, all roads leading to the "Cat and the Fiddle", the highest Inn for situation in England (1700 ft.), and alternating valleys forming the most picturesque district of inland England. In Buxton, if one is not climbing a hill, one is descending, and the men were lodged in five or six storey hotels. It was inevitable that the amputations should be lodged on the top floor, and the finger injuries on street level!

There were comparatively few bed patients, but it was necessary to see and follow up one's 150 men daily, as they had become so "fed up" with the monotony, the fear of disablement for life, and especially hope deferred as to return to Canada, a general mental malaise. It required considerable effort to keep them cheerful. The Sisters were responsible for seeing that they attended their various clinics punctually, had books and games in adequate quantity, and took outdoor exercise. Minor dressings and illnesses required daily attention, but there was no trying nursing strain, though living on ladders so to speak, countless steps mounted per diem, was very fatiguing.

We had a splendid Padre, beloved by the men, and he was a good friend of the sisters. His bulging bag of cigarettes was the centre of interest each morning, and he was to be found in all corners of the rambling building. There were outstanding examples of what a chaplain should be among all denominations, and it has been overstressed since that a unity and cooperation created in the war has been lost. In my humble opinion it was the Cause and the Flag under which they served that was the source of unity, and the differences in creed and practice which divide Christendom were little altered, as the result has shown. One might suggest however that in

another war *all* chaplains should be specially selected to honour their creed and cloth.

The citizens of Buxton of this generation (or rather the previous one) are not likely to forget the Canadians. It was a significant sight when the green slopes and Broadway in front of the Pump Room were crowded with blue uniforms—and crutches. It was a thousand pities that parties could not have been driven to see some of the close-by beauty spots in the lovely dells, fairy-like scenery of romance, before leaving England forever, as the large majority would do. But at that stage Great Britain was nearing the end of her ‘entertainment’ resources, in many ways. The wounded were an only too familiar sight, and most families were occupied in arduous war work, or had expended both money and energy for years on a generous scale, and could just carry on. Enthusiasm was dead, endurance remained. No one thought of defeat. Canadian officers and sisters had provided for them in this vicinity also two Convalescent Hospitals, which were most comfortable.

The intensive submarine campaign of the enemy had now been on for more than a year. Many cargoes of foodstuffs had been sunk, though the “Q” boats were taking toll around the coast. But few tramp ships could be spared for this duty, a huge number of prisoners had to be fed, and the army in the field must have the first and best share, as they usually had, with almost unflinching regularity. Among the phenomena of mentality exhibited since the war by those who are still influenced by German propaganda, has been the curious conclusion that it was a very wicked thing of the Allies to try to end the war by blockading provisions from the Central Powers in 1918, but quite natural, and even clever, of the enemy who started it in 1915, to starve out the population of the British Isles, including also women and children! What about anaemic children there?

Well, in March 1918, they were nearly succeeding. Food shop windows in Buxton, and many another town, were blank, and blackish bread was the only sort obtainable, margarine had long replaced butter, and sugar was a rare luxury. We all had little tin boxes with one ounce rations, later superseded by saccharine tablets. The new war industry of rabbit-breeding supplied us with an incredible number of meals per week, and the only alternative was horseflesh, which few of the men could be persuaded to eat. They believed the horses were sent back from the field, and revolted at devouring ‘comrades’ of a lower order. But it is very unlikely that this was so at any time. General orders were issued to conserve food in every possible way, and the few extras ceased. In every Unit in which I served most sisters had been accustomed to supplement the military diet sheet with

whatever items in the way of fruit, eggs, and canned foods they could buy for the patients, especially for supper, never regarded in the army as a real meal. Now this was to be abolished. Commanding Officer's rounds used to be made, keys had to be produced, and *bare* cupboards displayed daily. Nevertheless, about three times a week, some extra managed to appear in small quantities for those who needed it, but everyone was weak and hungry.

("What Everyone?!" "Well. . . . nearly everyone!")

Quartermasters' Stores had nothing to do with this extra provision. I may say that that Department had a curious psychology. Most of the 'Quarters' were well-disposed, especially after some had been patients, but one annoyed me immensely when I wanted a tin of pineapple for a special case. There was only one, and it crowned a pyramid of canned goods and jars ten feet high, artistically arranged on shelves, like a display window at home. A new supply had just come in from Canada, for the use of the sick, but he wouldn't part with the apex can! The idea seemed to be that these articles must be returned intact after the war, the officer whose list was longest getting a prize, perhaps? I read a book last year which mentioned that thousands of dollars' worth of Canadian army stores still lie in sheds in Liverpool, unclaimed, because of the cost of re-transportation. The tin of pineapple may be among them, and again it may not!

A Sergeant in the wards wrote a long skit on living conditions of the times, which was amusing, and at least partly true:

"There's nobody home here in Blighty,  
The old horse is butchered for meat,  
The lawn is a simple allotment  
Where green things are growing to eat.  
The dogs are all hid in the bracken,  
The cats now we never more hear;  
They have all got wind of the rumour  
That sausage is both scarce and dear!

"There's nobody home here in Blighty,  
The girls are at work making shells;  
There's nobody rocking the cradle,  
The kiddy just lies there and yells.  
No sugar to put in your coffee,  
(They say that the end is not yet)  
Meat scarcer than saints among sinners,  
And white bread has turned to brunette!" . . . .

Authentic news from the front was hard to get in March. We knew something serious was impending, and that the enemy with every man available would make a last effort before the American troops were ready. But the break through the Fifth Army at Cambrai, and the pressure on the road to Amiens, made us realize how terribly dangerous the situation might become. Never was the nation more calm or more silent. None of the men who left England that week expected to return. Our chaplain's son got a few hours' leave to see his father, and in the early dawn of Good Friday went his way. It was an expectant, and very solemn day. On March 31st. Easter Day, after a service which failed of being joyous, and an address full of religious faith and lofty patriotism, the chaplain said with emotion: "At this moment the fate of England and the Empire is being decided. Let us pray."

It was one hundred and three years since last at Waterloo the existence of Great Britain as a free nation had been threatened. We thought we heard guns faintly booming at night, with the same intonation as at Calais, but I don't suppose it was possible. Truly, as a journalist wrote: "Amiens to-day is the most thought of town in the world. It is on the lips and in the hearts of millions of people." On the 24th. March, perhaps the gravest words ever addressed to the British nation were printed in the London Evening papers. One editorial said:

"God, Defend the Right."

"On this grave and dreadful day of destiny there is a solemn hush over the homes of our people. It is the silence not of fear but of prayer. There is a great and fervent prayer in the heart of everyone of us here in England, a prayer too profound for lips to utter. Every man and woman of us can pass no single moment without an aching sympathy with that line of heroes who are fighting as men have never fought before that we may live. . . . All of us is immovable in the faith that nothing else is of any account beside the cause of England. On this day the terrific issue that has been growing for 47 years has come to its climax. We have that straight fight in which England is for the right, and the whole brute force of the German murder machine is hurled against the men who are standard bearers and warriors of justice and freedom. That magnificent Army's head is bloody but unbowed, and in the hush that is over the land, we pray to God, 'Defend the Right.' "

## A HYMN OF EMPIRE.

Praise to our God! through all our past  
His mighty arm hath held us fast;  
His rod and staff from age to age  
Shall rule and guide His Heritage.

Praise to our God! The Vine He set  
Within these Isles is fruitful yet;  
On many a shore her seedlings grow,  
'Neath many a sun her clusters glow.

Praise to our God! His power alone  
Can keep unmoved our ancient Throne;  
Sustained by counsels wise and just,  
And guarded by a people's trust.

REV. J. ELLISTON.

### XIII

#### AT THE KING'S COMMAND. THE PALACE.

Some of us had recently applied for duty in France again, and the serious turn of events assured us the reply to our request would not long be delayed. A telegram did arrive in the first week of April, but of a different tenour.

“You are commanded to attend at Buckingham Palace. . . .” A hurried survey of one’s best uniform, veil starched to perfection, new white gloves, and a train to London caught. How many sisters now at home, in the distant outposts of the Empire have forgotten that exciting journey? I remember we had to carry individual food cards for bread and meat, and when I produced the latter in the hotel, I was invited to step round to a butcher’s shop in Bloomsbury and bring back the ration. But though the serving in the centre of one’s plate was small, and one was not always sure of what it consisted, the marvel was that the immense throngs of citizens and soldiers were fed at all. The Food Control Commission performed miracles, with an even and regular distribution, the nation accommodated itself supremely well, and D.O.R.A. was a necessary evil, not grumbled at till she outstayed her usefulness.

Our taxi was halted at the Palace Gate, while sentry and policeman queried: “Decoration?”, and glanced at our telegrams. Passing in to the great inner courtyard, we ascended a red-carpeted staircase, in a hall of gold and scarlet, and were ushered into a dressing-room where nurses from all parts of the Empire were adjusting veils, and having surprise reunions with classmates or others met on service since 1914. Sixteen Canadians were among them. An Equerry presently conducted us to a large ante-room, where rows of gilt chairs, consecutively numbered, were placed. In front, through an archway, we saw a similar room, in which Imperial naval and military officers, Dominion representatives, and men of the rank and file were assembling. One observed that the Household Officers had all been wounded. They were lame, or had lost a leg or an eye, or were otherwise scarred in the nation’s service. One came and gave us instructions; roll call was taken, we were cautioned against changing seats, and the Aide adjusted a hook firmly on each uniform. Meticulous precision must be the rule at all these ceremonies, so that not the least hitch may occur. We were also told of the two curtseys necessary, and left to ourselves for an hour and a half. There were 400 in all summoned to the Investiture that day, from Admiral to

stoker, staff officer to private, and it was interesting to see the line of heroes, row by row, move into the Throne Room, though we regretted not to be able to identify each. Several Victoria Crosses were conferred, many recipients were on crutches, one in a wheel-chair, and a young widow had brought a boy of eight or so to receive his dead father's medal.

Through the hush of the third chamber we could hear a name announced, the King's voice murmuring sympathy and praise, a click of heels, a clank of swords, and then the reading aloud by the Lord Chamberlain of the deed which had gained the honour for the next in line. These gallant young fellows seemed all alike in their modest, controlled demeanor, and probably, as the brief words were cited, saw for an instant in a mental flashlight, the "hot corner" where they had won the right to stand before their Sovereign that day.

Just before the last dozen moved in, the Equerry came for us, asked us to stand, and as each name was called, the owner stepped into her place in the queue of about ninety women, and passed into the hall vacated by the man. The Q.A.I.M.N.S. headed the line, Territorials next, and then Dominion Sisters, and V.A.D. nurses. His Majesty stood in front of a dais, and each had to take six steps, face him, and curtsy. A second curtsy after receiving the Royal Red Cross, then back away three steps in the opposite direction, and depart through a door into the great entrance hall. The King recognized some of the Matrons, and questioned some Sisters who had two rows of medals, (Regular army foreign service) and to many more said a word of commendation, "I am very glad to give you this Cross"; "I appreciate your service to my army". He had been doing this for three years, amid a burden of exacting duties, and a load of heavy cares no King had ever sustained before him, but for each individual to the end of the line he had the same warm handshake, the same kind smile, and sincere manner. He was of course in service uniform, and the greatest bond of union among his subjects.

Outside the door, a footman handed us a case for the Cross, and we were informed that Queen Alexandra, always so interested before and during the war in the nursing profession, had commanded our attendance at Marlborough House. We therefore walked down the Mall in a flutter of veils and capes, as it was a windy day, and the photographers outside had to do a swift snap, to catch a face not wound up in a veil as in a turban. We stood and sat about for some time in the entrance hall at Marlborough House, while the Hon. Charlotte Knollys talked informally about our work and experiences. There was the same ceremony about the reception. Our names

were announced twice, and we went up three steps before bowing to the Queen Mother, who, with the gracious smile for which she was famed, handed us an autographed book on the Red Cross, and a symbolic picture, with her portrait inset. Her deafness prevented any conversation, and one could see that the war and her personal sorrows had thrown a great strain upon her, though she was to live another eight years. She noted each uniform as we passed by, and seemed to know quite well some of her own military Sisters. Passing behind her, into a corridor, we had had our special interview with Royalty, and were free to return whence we came. A memory that will not be blotted out is that of the calm and dignity of the court, the serene and soldierly bearing of King George amidst a week of anxiety such as even the Great War had not exceeded.

London almost seemed empty in comparison with the military activity of some months before. Every man who could march had gone back to France or Belgium, air-raid shelters were indicated on the lamp-posts as available almost at every corner, the 'tubes' and underground railways being popular, a safety zone I should not have fancied myself. When a corner was bombed, rubbish was quickly cleared away, and a hoarding, often bearing posters of year-old plays, was run up in a few hours, so that re-passing the spot the next day, no trace remained of the damage, and enemy agents, if any remained at this time, could not report that Russell Square, or the Post-Office, or the Tower were a mass of ruins, though our prisoners in Germany were frequently told that both London and Paris had been practically destroyed. There must be some holders of the iron cross yet in that case upon whom it was bestowed for these feats! Wolfe's cenotaph in the Abbey was shrouded in Canadian flags. The W.A.A.C.s and W.R.E.N.s and other women's army units in uniform were carrying on in every department of the national life with trained efficiency of incalculable value.

The month of April wore on, and relief was afforded by the immortal exploit on St. George's Day at Zeebrugge, of which the details were given out, and which undoubtedly had a marked influence for good on the diminishing submarine campaign, and the food supply. (After the war I saw the Mole at Zeebrugge before anything had been changed, and a great floating German mine had been salvaged, bearing the words, "Gott strafe England", the subsequent reaction to the 1914 slogan and estimate of the "Contemptible little army!" They knew better in 1918. But the Germans have never had any sense of humour.) Nevertheless on April 27th. the Germans were within eight miles of Amiens! A London paper summed up what I feel sure was the resolve of the entire nation:

## BE BRITISH

“We have to be true to ourselves to-day. We need cool heads and steadfast hearts. There is nothing to do, nothing to think about, nothing to talk about, nothing to serve but our armies in the field, the determination to victory. We marvel at the reckless ruthlessness of the Kaiser. More than ever we realize that he and the ‘Prussian’ military Government are world-assassins in this terrible blood-bath. Let us insist that our Government will tell the people promptly and fully the whole truth as the battles sway. The nation can stand it. We have to win, and we shall do so, and then we will be dispassionate and just.

‘He is the free man whom the Truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside.’ ”

## SINKING OF HOSPITAL SHIPS.

1915-1918

Hospital Ships torpedoed or mined numbered in excess of 15.

Llandoverly Castle:	Personnel drowned	87
Anglia:	Wounded Patients drowned	139
Warilda:	” ” ”	123
Others: In most cases the numbers less than these.		

## HOSPITALS BOMBED.

The following Canadian Hospitals were attacked in England, most of them in 1917.

Chatham House, Ramsgate (Granville Auxiliary) twice. Westcliffe Hospital, Shorncliffe. Townley Castle, Ramsgate. Kingscliffe Can. Red Cross Nurses' Home. Shorncliffe Military Hospital. Total Casualties: Killed 35. Wounded 121.

Air-Raids Canadian Hospitals in France: Killed 81. Wounded 93. The number of Canadian Hospitals, including casualty clearing stations equipped and sent overseas was about 30.

(Full Records of British (Imperials) Hospitals bombed in England and France, with hundreds of Casualties, not available to present writer.)

Among the numerous hospital ships deliberately sunk by the Germans, and troop transports on which the writer had previously travelled, no less than seven were torpedoed or mined. In the latter cases, though seldom were attempts made by the enemy to save life, and the nature of the attack precluded rescue of many, it was legitimate warfare, no doubt. But hospital ship sinkings were foul murder. The great Britannic (48,000 tons) went down in the Ægean. Besides the Asturias and the Llandoverly Castle, the Gloucester Castle was sunk in the Channel, with the loss of 52 R.A.M.C. personnel. A number of the Staff perished with the Lanfranc, from which 151 German prisoners were saved. The Dover Castle fell a victim, being twice torpedoed, early in 1917, but all patients and personnel were taken off.

In the mouth of the Channel several ships carrying wounded met a similar fate, but quick and well-directed action of other steamers prevented frightful consequences. Eight English Sisters went down on the Osmanieh,

and a larger number on other occasions. The Marquette carried 99 on board (10 Sisters) to death in 1915, and from the Transylvania 66 Sisters were removed safely. In nearly all these “despicable outrages”, as the Allied Press declared, the survivors in boats or in the water were left to die, or maltreated in “circumstances of utmost brutality”. But on the transports discipline and devotion over and over again reproduced the scenes of the Birkenhead of other days.

One is proud to remember that the Sisters on Hospital ships remained at their posts till all patients had been transferred, and only then did the traditional order, ‘Women first’, apply. Finally, as far as these Red Cross Vessels were concerned, they ceased to be distinguished by special markings, as such only rendered them an easier prey to the lawless and pitiless enemy; an everlasting shame to the “U” boat Commanders and their superiors.

## THE VOLUNTEER.

Here lies the clerk who half his life had spent  
    Toiling at ledgers in a city grey,  
Thinking that so his days would drift away  
    With no lance broken in life's tournament:  
Yet ever'twixt the books and his keen eyes  
    The gleaming eagles of the legions came,  
And horsemen, charging under phantom skies  
    Went thundering past beneath the oriflamme.

And now those waiting dreams are satisfied:  
    From twilight to the halls of dawn he went;  
His lance is broken, but he lies content  
    With that high hour in which he lived and died.  
And failing this, he needs no recompense  
    Who found his battle in the last resort,  
Nor needs he any hearse to bear him hence  
    Who goes to join the men of Agincourt.

HERBERT ASQUITH (Jr.)  
*(by permission.)*

## XIV

### 1918. BOULOGNE AND AIR-RAIDS.

After this interlude, it was with personal joy, and the envy of many that two of us received orders on April 12th., our application for service in France being approved. It was an emergency call for nurses, as the consequences of the break in the line, the terrific carnage of the close fighting, the confusion of the retreat, and the congestion of hospitals in all areas, needed relief after weeks of overwork and menace. I think we reached London on a freight train, for I remember we were in a little compartment with two benches at the rear of trucks, and saw no conductor, and rattled and jolted, and stopped frequently till 4 A.M., when we ran into the Midland station. The hotel, depleted of its staff, had only one sleepy old man behind the desk, but we literally fell into bed, and knew nothing more till a jangle of church bells at 11 roused us. We needed several articles of equipment, and it was Sunday. A telephone call to the shop where our uniforms were made elicited the fact that two cleaners were there, and would let us in if we knew where to find what we wanted. We selected them in the dim, sheeted show-rooms, and I verily believe could have loaded a lorry with goods and driven off. Were we not Sisters, and Canadians? Our name stood high in England since Ypres. With that baffling English trust in honesty, we were allowed to depart without payment, one of the men offering to parcel our merchandise, and come back at 5 P.M. to hand it out, and receive our cheques. And there he was to the minute.

How happy we were to see once more after a long absence the silhouette of Boulogne Cathedral, the gray walls of the massive citadel, the irregular pile of hotels, and steep-roofed houses along the quays, the masts of the fishing boats, the curving break-water and the light house.

No. 3 Canadian General Hospital was formed originally of some of the most distinguished surgeons and physicians of Montreal and McGill University, the first such unit to be enrolled in the Empire. The nurses came chiefly from the two largest hospitals there, the Montreal General and Royal Victoria. And the first summer medical students had volunteered as orderlies and dressers. It was therefore a more homogeneous Unit than others that had preceded it. No. 1 General or Base Hospital at Etaples, and No. 2 General at Le Tréport had been carrying on a steady service since the spring of 1915, and these Base Hospitals got all the worst cases in the area behind a

particular sector. Organized for “the duration”, they had not the constant uncertainty, movement and evacuation of patients in the Stationarys, (a quaint misnomer) but after a severe engagement their work was extremely heavy; operating day and night, and after care of wounded tested all resources, for which of course they were more fully equipped. They expanded to 2000 beds on occasion. Some men could not be moved for months. Throughout the four years the Canadian Medical Profession was proud to hear general praise of the layout, ward arrangements, surgical and nursing skill given to all Casualties in these two representative Units, and patients were united in grateful acknowledgment to doctors, nurses, and orderlies.

“McGill” had been established for some time at the summit of that two mile long hill, which had seen so many thousand British troops march up it to the tune of “Tipperary”, since August 8th. 1914, till want of breath silenced them. The site of the huts was amidst trees, and included the semi-ruins of a Jesuit College, which was utilized as operating theatre, etc., with a post-operative ward adjoining. Capacity was 2400, M.O.s 28, staff 300, and the Sisters numbered about 110. Since the enemy advance of March, they had been working at high pressure, and as the Germans retook ground that had been British since 1914, even Boulogne became fairly near the front, and emergency dominated all actions.

At various times for services at the Clearing Stations, Canadian Medical Officers had been gazetted awards of the V.C. and M.C., and more such recognitions of valour and duty were won in 1918. To these weeks also belongs the story of the heroic conduct of Sisters who remained to the last minute in these Clearing stations, and as they fell back, continued to assist the surgeons in tents set up by the wayside, doing what they could for the wounded, till ordered to Boulogne, unable to risk capture by an enemy who did not respect the Red Cross. Those men who had a chance for life went down in the trains, and ambulances (many driven by women) which came up to the firing-line, but many had to be carried out on stretchers, and left on the grass to die, for neither time nor conditions allowed evacuation of all. I wish these ex-sisters would combine their experiences in a brochure for record in the Canadian Nurses’ Association. It is a thrilling chapter in the history of the C.A.M.C., which should be set down before all is obliterated. Some of these Sisters were attached to what had become known as Surgical Teams, which did good work over a wide area. They were composed of Surgeon, Sister, Anaesthetist (often a Sister) a non-commissioned officer and an orderly, and were sent as a mobile unit to whatever points their

services were most required, remaining a certain number of weeks before relieved. They had to have a practical “gas-mask course” before they left.

Close to No. 3 rose the tall Colonne de la Grande Armée, looking out to the Channel, where below Napoleon had assembled his regiments for one of those carefully planned invasions of England which never materialized. However there was the Column, in memory of the intention, and all around it for miles British camps, hospitals, cemeteries, marching men, guns and stores, on such a scale as even Napoleon never dreamed of. . . . “the nation of shopkeepers” come to the aid of his erstwhile subjects, and for their own existence, to bar the way against an equally boundless ambition, and more ruthless foe. Lower again, on the beach at Ambleteuse, Caesar’s Cavalry are said to have embarked for England. He had more luck, but got such a fierce reception that it was ninety years before Romans again invaded the White Island.

Up to the month of July the situation was so complicated and obscure on the new trench alignments that the hospital was turned into a huge Clearing Station in itself. As many as 670 were once admitted in 24 hours, fed, put to bed, dressed, operated on if necessary, and 469 sent across the Channel the same night. We had constantly to be ready for rush orders, but there were also periods when the expected did not happen, and we were idle. There always remained several wards where the fractures unable to be moved were concentrated and where all the appliances and treatments evolved by war surgery were in use. One hut which required good nursing care was that set apart for chest cases, mortality among such being high. Mustard gas too provided us with a large number of suffering men, few of whom probably were curable. Later too the Influenza epidemic almost filled every hut with medical cases, and the daily work became more like that of a civilian city hospital, with the greater proportion of the patients in bed for days. Infected wounds and gas gangrene were the most serious and difficult cases to treat for months in 1918, amputations being more numerous than at any other period, and tetanus prevalent. Surgical and nursing skill were united in effort to save life and limb amid the appalling wastage of war.

On May 19th.-20th. occurred the shocking affair at Etaples, twenty miles away, the deliberate bombing by a score of enemy planes of English and Canadian Hospitals, full of helpless patients, supposed to be protected by the Red Cross. There were 171 casualties, 56 fatal, many from machine gun bullets, and among them seven Canadian sisters, of whom four died. As one London paper put it: “This is one of the most diabolical crimes that Germany has committed. Let us hear no more of German Airmen’s

‘chivalry.’ ” These incidents do not properly come within the scope of these pages, as I was not present, but I cannot refrain from mentioning them. One who was there said of the Sisters: “I was proud of them.” There was no panic. Those not on duty lay under beds to avoid breaking glass. Amid darkness, explosions, noise, and bursts of flame, no one made any outcry, and the Matron and five Sisters received the soldiers’ decoration, the military medal, for bravery in action. One Sister went out to get morphia for a companion bleeding to death, and others rendered first aid, literally *under* fire. “I thought the girls were splendid”, wrote an eyewitness: “Sister W. . . . dying out on the hillside, and knowing it, yet begging them not to bring stretcher bearers into that inferno, when it could not save her. All of them saying, just as the men do, ‘Don’t bother with me; I’ll be all right. You people will be exhausted’. All the blackened faces. . . .”

The Canadian Hospitals involved were Nos. 1 and 7 General, and 7 and 9 Stationary. Attacked again later, the destruction was so great that Etaples was evacuated within two weeks. Lives of several Sisters were saved by one, perhaps the heroine of the night, who went back over and over again, and insisted on getting her comrades out of a hut which had taken fire unknown to them. A long procession wound through the great Etaples military cemetery two days later, (12,500 graves there) and there the names of the victims may be read among the stones bearing the Maple Leaf. We heard the bombardment distinctly, and the Hun planes had passed over us, but had no missiles left on their return. About a month after this outrage we heard with horror and incredulity of the sinking of the Llandoverly Castle hospital ship, fortunately without patients, and the drowning of fourteen Canadian Sisters and others in an open boat. Ten New Zealand Sisters had previously met a similar fate in the Marquette. The number of Imperial nurses drowned must have exceeded this total, and many were torpedoed and rescued.

Boulogne was bombed almost nightly that summer, chiefly to destroy the morale of the population, as well as deal a blow at the British line of communications. It was pitiful to see the French, young and old, wending their way at nightfall to the galleries opened under the broad walls of the fortifications. Some died there, some were born, and at 5 A.M. back they tramped again to daily work, worn, sleepless, but resigned as ever to passive resistance. On June 30th water and electricity were cut off for some hours by bombing damage to the main conduits, and the enemy airmen circled so low at times that it seemed they proposed to land in the grounds. Shrapnel fell like rain, and five terrific explosions smashed glass far and near. On this occasion discussion arose as to how best to show up hospital areas at night,

and orders were posted to lay out a large pebbled or white-washed square on the ground, with the Red Cross in the centre. Many argued however that this merely supplied an easy target for the enemy airmen, and the latter speakers from evidence accumulated were apt to be right.

To us also it was a nerve-racking time, as we were disturbed once and twice nightly if the weather was clear, and about five nights a week. Usually about 11 P.M. a maroon would sound the alarm, "Huns over lines." The second signal informed us the enemy airmen were at Calais, and the third that they were in our own area. All lights were immediately extinguished, and an eerie silence awaited the first crash. It was not so much the noise as the concussion on the ground that was most terrifying, and speculation never could be sure of the direction, and who or what had been hit. Breaking of glass, shrapnel from French anti-aircraft posts, sharp machine guns in action, and "Lizzie" close at hand increased the din. From a German prisoners' camp near by always came cries of terror, and demands to be released from the attentions of their own craft!

I seem to recollect that when a number of us foregathered in the dark in some central hut on these occasions, and Sisters off duty were *doubling up* beneath beds in twos and threes, that the site *I* selected was quite popular. For never being able to fit *under* an army cot, I had to remain on top of one, and there was quite a competition for the extra protection of the lower storey! . . . .

One particular night, August 14th., it was estimated 80 bombs fell on the town and vicinity, in an attack which lasted one and a half hours, over an area of perhaps three by one and a half miles, such a raid as even London had not experienced. Several hospitals were hit that night, and nurses and patients killed at Wimereux, a St. Johns' Ambulance party, just back from unloading a Red Cross Train, were wiped out, an ammunition plant was struck, a railway dump and British Officers' Headquarters practically destroyed, the docks hit, and the Casino hospital set on fire. Several other fires also started, which with star-shells, flares and searchlight beams, the continuous barrage, and the chatter of the 'Archies', made it appear that all Boulogne was doomed. Forty were killed, and stretcher bearers worked amid the burning ruins, collecting the casualties with death overhead. Among those who had stationed themselves with their own cars in various quarters of the town to convey wounded to hospital in these raids, were a number of English women, whose courage and prompt aid saved many a life, and won the admiration of the inhabitants. We ourselves were fortunate, No. 3 getting only a 'dud' shell, and another which burst in the sunken road

between the hospital and the Sisters' Quarters. There was a dug-out of sandbags in the corner of our ground then, but two of us preferred, if we were about to die of Hun frightfulness, not to be smothered, and sitting at the door of our hut, had a good view of the weird scene. The red glare of fires, bursts of firing from the defence positions, the shaking of the ground under us, shrapnel pattering on our roof. . . . a nose-cap whacked on to our doorstep. . . . made an appalling ensemble. To walk down the Grande Rue next day, with its gaping hotel rooms, its blockage of bricks and stone, the great holes in the fields, ruins of walls and gardens, yawning windows, would have resembled nothing but an earthquake, had we not become familiar from photos with such scenes of devastation.

Sir Robert Borden came over just then, and ordered timbered dugouts to be prepared for sisters off duty, as it was at last realized that the Germans would observe no rules of war whatever. There was some suggestion that sisters should be withdrawn from night-duty but as it met with strenuous opposition it was never put into effect. The tunnel, built by Canadian Railway troops, and finished by German prisoners, was 22 feet underground, with 10 feet of earth above. Two entrances, screened by sandbags, provided escape if necessary. It was a cold and clammy shelter to slide into from a warm bed. It was "an Order" that everyone must repair to this retreat at the second maroon. One night when I had warned a new arrival from Canada, who was all excitement, and inclined to think air-raids were great fun, that she must not linger, she still stood at the entrance, bound to see the first attack anyway. A bomb crashed, and she came hurtling down the slippery mud steps, on top of me, stuttering: "Was. . . that. . . a b. . . b. . . bomb?", while the whole place quivered, and stones clattered outside. Sundry small articles were scattered about our floors when we came up, and the next field had a hole in it the size of a cottage. We had to be always on the alert at 11 P.M., and more often than not the Alarm sounded. A scramble for boots, a grasp at a kimona and military coat, and we joined the parade of the tired, angry company of pigtails and pyjamas. Scarcely had the "All clear" been sounded by a bugler on the walls of the town, and we were lying dressed and muddy on our beds, (for we knew 'Fritz' would be still about) than the Alarm would ring out again, and the performance be repeated. Often a third time the "Alert" roused us, and perhaps it was 3 A.M. before we got to sleep, to rise again at 6, and go about our duties. It was extremely fatiguing, but did not succeed in breaking our spirit. Sisters from the Clearing Stations, spending a night on the way to leave, declared ours appeared to be the real front, as far as air attacks went. We could always tell the difference between

an enemy machine, which had a wicked throb, and our own, which droned or hummed.

Everyone preferred to be on duty during air-raids. There were things to do, even in the dark. We carried morphine, hypodermic and tourniquets in our apron pockets. The worst cases were visited, and rounds made to see that no light was visible. I saw a speck at the end of a ward one night, while the enemy was above us, and on remonstrating, an apologetic voice of a lad of 18, replied: "Sorry, Sister, never thought. It was something to bite on." To those who lay helpless in splints, it was a greater ordeal than fighting, waiting for the next 'hate' to mangle already crushed frames. On the whole however the soldiers slept through raids, and my waking those who had beds up in a great attic under some skylights, where they might lose their eyesight, was not really popular. No air fighters could be spared from the front at that time for defence of back-areas. At the end of August we were able to remark that we hadn't had a raid for a week, and the enemy became too occupied then with the great offensive of the Allies to spend the nights annoying us. They had failed in their objective, paralyzing Boulogne harbour, and shaking the fortitude of the Boulognais. But two more of our nurses had been murdered in the meantime in another dastardly attack on British hospitals there. At Doullens in No. 3 Canadian Stationary a night operation was in progress, and as the German aircraft flew back and forth overhead, they finally with machine guns killed patient, surgeons, sisters and attendants. No. 7 and 9 Stationaries were practically wrecked, and personnel had to be withdrawn.

On Sunday June 30th., both men and nurses proceeded to various cemeteries to decorate Canadian graves for Dominion Day. The first British cemetery which we had visited at the top of the hill in Boulogne in November, 1914, was now closed, and in beautiful order, but alas! the immense increase in the green mounds, the long straight rows of trenches, the little crosses arm to arm, the names of thousands added, since, during the far-flung course of duty, we had last stood there. A short united service was held, and the Last Post sounded.

One of the most fantastic sights of the whole war happened each evening at Boulogne. A row of fat, 'sausage' balloons would rise irregularly to the east of the town, wavering and inflating themselves in an awkward, sluggish fashion, like great, brown pigs. They carried an invisible wire net, and were for the purpose of entangling enemy aircraft, like chains in the Straits of Dover for 'U' boats. Opinion was divided as to their utility. They may have stopped a few planes, but others got through or above them. The Silver King

and Silver Queen, British Observation Balloons, floated gracefully above the Channel most days, and it was a great relief to see each morning a group of our planes soaring over camp towards the lines. The first year of lack of guns, ammunition, *and an army*, were a terrible strain even to the non-Combatants. Only—as we counted each ‘bus’, we felt it told its tale of the previous day’s losses. Our clever Canadian Concert party the “Dumbells” had been giving entertainments in the reserve lines for a long time, and our patients enjoyed a visit from them, and “shows” nightly in the Y.M.C.A. Hut. The “Maple Leaves” also entertained us later.

The hospital huts of No. 3 were on the whole more commodious than others in which I had served, central aisle was wider, and at one end a small office was provided, and a compartment for preparation of diets, from which also meals were handed out after being received from the main cook-house; washing of dishes was done in the wards. A patient was selected in each hut and given a week or so longer of convalescence before being marked for “Con. Camp”. Among these, as a rule, easily the best were the “Jocks”. These Scottish boys seemed to have been home-trained to be useful, enterprising and faithful in little jobs. I don’t know what we should have done without them. One kept my “primus stove” going for two weeks. I think he got out of bed at midnight to take a look at it, and had a pride in helping to ‘run’ the ward. Canadian Sisters always had a great deal more physical work to do in the wards than the English Nurses, as their trained orderlies accomplished a large amount of routine care of the patients in the latter hospitals. One of the ‘Jocks’ could not sleep one night after admission, though hot drinks, etc. had been given him. Replying to the nurse’s enquiry as to what was the matter about 3 A.M., he said: “I’m quite O.K., Sister. It must be the bed. I haven’t been in one for seventeen months.” I admit this was the one and only occasion when I heard of “rest in bed” keeping a soldier awake! German prisoners were employed in outside duties in various camps, being marched over from their barbed wire enclosures daily. Our patients used to throw out cigarettes to them, and they were chiefly at this time young men who had been school-boys before 1914, stolid, expressionless, and dull. Though these youths had no personal share in preparation for hostilities during previous years, they had all formed part of the compulsory school navy league bands, and had been educated in every possible manner to glorify the fleet of the Vaterland, and contribute their pfennigs to its increase for the purpose, as they were told, of rending from England, that arch enemy, the command of the sea. It was therefore not to be wondered at that they were all ready and looking forward to “The Day”.

We had too in 1918 some American patients from Calais who had met with accidents or were ill. I was surprised to find that among them was a considerable percentage of illiterate young men. Most of the Americans who had fought with the Canadian contingents I think elected to remain with them after the entry of their own country into the war. Personally I believe Canada had a great deal to do with U.S.A. final participation, through interest and admiration for the achievements of this Dominion, publicly and privately expressed. It was only in 1919 that we learned for the first time 'WHO HAD WON THE WAR.'! "McGill" also was the hospital to which the Portuguese sick were sent, and they averaged about 600 listed during most of 1918, over 5000 in all receiving medical attention.

A few statistics of a General Hospital in war may prove informative for comparison.

From Aug. 7th. 1915 to April 1919.

Total cases admitted:	143,762
Wounded:	52,389
Sick:	81,689
Died:	986
Operations:	11,395
Admissions wounded one night,	490
Passed through, busiest month	46,000
Operated on one month,	2,300

A reminder of Lemnos came on Oct. 31st. when a brief despatch announced that General Townshend had signed an Armistice with Turkey in Mudros Bay, some little consolation for the ills endured there. Other Armistice rumours reached us with regard to the western front, but were scarcely heeded, for "They say" had long lost authority. Also the victorious advance of the last three months, in which Canadians took a glorious part, must, we thought, be continued into Berlin.

## THE SUPREME SACRIFICE.

O Valiant Hearts, who to your glory came  
Through dust of conflict, and through battle flame,  
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,  
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.

Proudly you gathered, rank on rank to war,  
As who had heard God's message from afar,  
All you had hoped for, all you had you gave  
To save mankind, yourselves you scorned to save.

Splendid you passed, the great surrender made,  
Into the light that never more shall fade;  
Deep your contentment in that blest abode  
Who wait the last clear trumpet-call of God. . . .

J. S. ARKWRIGHT.

*(father of three sons killed)*

## XV

### “LEAVE” ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA.

For once Rumour proved correct, but the cessation of fighting came so quickly in the end, that few could credit it. Leave was not always a matter of choice, and my fourth had been applied for weeks previously and began Nov. 9th., so that I did not spend Armistice Day in the midst of the Army, as I would have wished. But all along the railway line to Paris on the 10th., there was an atmosphere of expectation. . . . a great sigh seemed to go up from the very earth, and old men and women were actually doing nothing here and there by their cottages, a strange sight then, and a sign of a cruel tension relaxed. That calm, sunny Sunday afternoon was the happiest in France for four and half years. What was happening at G.H.Q.? What would the Germans do? was on every lip.

I had seen Amiens and its glorious Cathedral in 1914, but now it was much battered by shell-fire, and almost empty of inhabitants. Dugouts came almost up to the railway, and hastily prepared battery sandbag positions thrown up in the retreat along the Somme in the spring. Craters of bombardments pitted the fields. A Canadian artillery officer was in the same compartment, and all along the track near Amiens pointed out cavalry lines, gun pits and trenches, from which on Aug. 8th. our men had started out on the final 100 days' fighting, from which there had been no turning back. We had passed the immense cemetery at Etaples, the row upon row of white crosses, stretching away to the left, the largest graveyard in any war, and now, scattered singly and in groups, were mounds and patches surrounded with barbed wire, over which an overwhelming silence brooded. Many U.S.A. aviators were on the train, going to some flying centre further south, and one could see that they failed entirely to understand the strain that France had supported for four terrible years, as America has failed ever since.

There must have been a million people in the streets of Paris. They were brilliantly illuminated for the first time, and that alone was now a novelty to the inhabitants of the “city of light”. They were buying tri-colours and streamers, and tin horns, and shops were opening up such stores long packed away. In the Gare de Lyons the Restaurant was full of Allied officers toasting the end of hostilities, smiles wreathed every face, strangers shook hands with mutual congratulations, special editions of the papers were at a

premium, stations choked with French battalions going and coming for the last time. Hilarious uproar was however left for the next day.

A very uncomfortable night followed, sitting up in an eight-seated compartment, all occupied, and the beautiful Rhone Valley lay before us in the morning. At Marseilles we heard the first Armistice communiqué, and that the "Cease Fire" would go into effect at eleven. It was then ten minutes to the hour. The whole situation seemed unreal. We kept saying to ourselves and aloud, "The war is over. . . . the war is over!" but it was hours before we could adjust ourselves to all that it meant in many lands, as the news sped round the globe. At 5 P.M. Cannes was reached, and there the streets were already beflagged, illuminated, and decorations being bought by the population. One very pathetic incident was enacted beside us. A group of blinded poilus, in faded French uniforms, stood in one of the squares, singing quaveringly "La Marseillaise", hands at the salute.

The Nurses' Hostel in charge of Lady Gifford, in the Esterel Hotel housed Sisters of all parts of the Empire for rest in the midst of charming scenery, and a peaceful atmosphere, difficult to assimilate after conditions in northern France. The population seemed to have felt the war very little, appeared much more Italian than French, as logical history would explain. They had not seen the British army, and at the moment, rather disgustingly we thought, were fawning on the Americans, looking forward to the tourist trade of pre-war days. The American troops on leave, fresh, and with lots of money, now began to spread themselves over the south, and some never gained much impression of what the north was like. We distinctly objected, in the circumstances, being taken for "Infirmières Américaines", and said so.

The Hostel was decorated with flowers and flags, and we drank the King's health in champagne at dinner, and then a silent toast to the vanished millions, and to those of our own company. On the following Sunday the British colony assembled at Christ Church three times, as they were doing, with the same prayers and praises "from the rising of the sun to the going down or the same," throughout the world. Amid thanksgiving for Peace, and the still unrealized aspiration that dominated all minds at that moment, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth" was solemnly read. The thoughts of all hearts were with the dead. For many months the very beautiful hymn, "O Valiant Hearts" had been written and distributed to British churches at home and on the continent in anticipation of this day. It was borne in upon every soul that the sacrifice had *not* been in vain, for Right had triumphed. There was not a dry eye in the congregation as the plaintive music throbbed into silence:

“In glorious hope their proud and sorrowing land  
Commits her children to Thy gracious hand.”

The Dead March of Remembrance succeeded, and the National Anthem, “Send him victorious”, came as a relief to overcharged memories.

For the first time we could give ourselves to unalloyed enjoyment of a holiday, and the gorgeous foliage, profuse display of flowers growing at will everywhere, sparkling sea and brilliant sun, especially after the scenes of devastation, the rain and mud of northern France. The Riviera was a winter Paradise, the magnificent Grande Corniche drive, and the thrills of the Gorge du Loup, the ancient and picturesque villages like Vence and Eze, perched on pinnacles of rock at dizzy heights, mountain precipices, the perfume factories of Grasse, seaviews from La Turbie, Nice, Menton, and Monte Carlo set in the frame of the blue Mediterranean, against a background of Alpes Maritimes, all formed a composite picture of the beauties of Nature, and reminded us that these regions too had seen old wars, and after fiendish destruction of life then, as now, were carpeted with consolation. At the Casino at Monte Carlo no one in uniform was allowed inside the great door, but we caught glimpses of the tables and their devotees through the glass, as they feverishly passed in and out.

Returning, we spent a day in Paris, extraordinarily crowded and interesting. . . . In the Place de la Concorde the sight was the statue of Strasbourg, crape removed after 48 years. That representing Lille too was smothered in flowers, and ten foot high wreaths from the inhabitants conveyed their gratitude to the British army for deliverance. The whole Place was filled with captured guns, aeroplanes, and other trophies. A “Big Bertha” flanked a howitzer from Verdun, and the entire length of the Champs Elysées as far as the Arc de Triomphe was lined with thousands of enemy cannon. The statue of Joan of Arc had disappeared beneath cascades of flowers, a wreath from the British Army occupying the place of honour in the centre. Guynemer’s plane stood in a corner of Les Invalides, also bedecked with flowers, and workmen were removing sandbags from Napoleon’s tomb. One wondered what he thought about it all, that man of personal ambition, to whom France was secondary. One’s thoughts reverted to the first weeks of 1914, the huge grey phalanx rolling day by day nearer to the City, the hastily thrown up defences, the army in taxi-cabs! and then on Sept. 6th the turning movement at the Marne, when Germany lost the initiative gambled for, and with it the War. “If I had succeeded”, said Von Kluck, “the war would have been won.” With devout thankfulness we stood in a free Paris, recognizing in that failure that Providence was *not* on the

side of the big battalions. The paint was being scraped from street lamps, windows cleaned, obstructions carried away, and a general brush-up in progress. A lavish display of flags, street standards, and banners was preparing, as our King and Queen were paying a state visit next day. My leave expired that night. It was a great temptation to stay over and see one historic pageant, and I have never ceased to regret that I didn't.

We remarked as we left Paris, and its still military Gare du Nord, that whatever future visits we might pay to France and her railway stations (which are emphatically *not* among her attractions) we should instinctively look for the magic letters: R.T.O. What a boon these British Railway transport officers were to their countrymen and women, and to the sons and daughters from afar claiming their services by right of a common cause and ancestry. "O.H.M.S." had bound us all, but the links were loosening.

## THE BELFRY OF MONS.

At Mons there is a belfry tall  
That chimes from noon to noon;  
At every quarter of the hour  
It scatters forth a lovely shower  
Of little notes, that from the tower  
All flutter down in tune.

At Mons there lie a mort o' lads  
A-row and underground,  
That shall not hear the belfry ring,  
Nor human voice nor anything  
Till at the last summoning  
They hear the trumpet sound.

W. THORLEY in Saturday Review.  
*(by permission.)*

## RESURGAM.

We lie like castaways upon the shore  
Whose lives were lost upon the great retreat;  
But whither ebb has been the flow shall pour,  
And we await the tide's returning feet.

SHANE LESLIE.  
*(Times' History of the War)*

## XVI

### 1918. "BACK TO MONS."

All Clearing Stations and some of the Stationary Hospitals were now following up the armies towards the German frontier, and various changes in personnel were put into effect. Ordered to No. 4 C.C.S. at Valenciennes on Dec 1st., several of us set out by ambulance on an ever memorable drive. At St. Pol we spent two nights at No. 12 British Stationary, and took five hours to make the 75 miles between there and Valenciennes. The roads had had the worst shell-holes repaired, but enormous traffic both ways needed a space six times as wide, and long halts were inevitable. Lorries, artillery and platoons of infantry were moving west, the men lolling smoking on their vehicles, and those afoot marching at ease, carrying "souvenirs" for wife or sweetheart. German prisoners collecting salvage, or filling in trenches looked on enviously, but were just as glad the war was over, having had more than enough of it since the tide turned. Then came line after line of trenches, zig-zagging away on each side of the road, north and south as far as the eye could see. Reserve dumps, barbed wire still in place for miles, heaps of tins and shell-cases, a few broken-up cemeteries, single graves by the roadside, and we were in what once had been "No man's land."

Arras had almost rivalled Ypres and Verdun in war news, and now we were in the midst of the ruined town. The wrecked Cathedral was off to the left, the streets almost impassable, being cleared by prisoners. The ambulance jolted and lurched over débris, in the narrow passages marked "Safe for traffic." "Danger" sign-posts were planted at almost every corner, or what had been a corner, and now and then explosions rent the air; not a house remained intact. We crossed the former Hindenburg line near the site of the village of Roeux. Here the assault on the trenches had reduced them to ditches of wet rubbish in many places. Not a trace of any part of the village remained. It was dust, and a sign-post with the word "Roeux" its only memorial.

Through Vitry and Brébières, empty of inhabitants, with railways destroyed, bridges blown up, embankments mined, and shell-holes pitting every yard of the landscape, it looked as if 20 years would be too short to repair the damage. Douai was a sorry spectacle, much of the destruction being caused of course by our own shells on Oct. 17th. German signs and shop advertisements studded the area, and Refugees by hundreds were

slowly tramping back, or piled on British lorries, to find the spot they once called home. Twisted tree trunks, overgrown fields, and still worse desolation met us as we drove east. Presently we ran through the Place of Denain, where the Prince of Wales and Sir Arthur Currie had received the thanks of the people three weeks before.

Valenciennes was in the same state, but full of British troops. Explosions went on all day, either buried shells, or dynamiting dangerous buildings, and at night soldiers marching through in the moonlight continued the aspect of the last four years, for there were no street lights yet. When No. 4 entered on Nov. 8th., bodies of our soldiers still lay in the streets. Cutting of canals had flooded much of the surrounding country; the railway station had been flattened by our bombers. This Clearing station had opened in a French school which the enemy had used for a hospital. Their labels and medical orders were still on the walls, and it was in a filthy state, partly by *malice propense*, but throughout testifying to the fact that the Germans, professional or otherwise, are not the clean nation which, among other fictions, we had been taught to believe. Among the plaster fragments lying on the floor I found a beautiful statuette of a white Christ, about 15 inches high, features and body unharmed. (I brought it back to Canada.)

The former big class-rooms were filled with patients suffering from the acute stage of 'Flu epidemic which swept Europe in 1918, carrying off thousands the war had spared! There were not nearly enough beds, stretchers occupied every vacant space. There was no material of any kind to work with, for which SOMEBODY *should* have been responsible. All the staff had to wear gauze masks on duty. . . very trying. To add to the distress, dying men were brought in who had been turned loose by the enemy from their prison camps. Let no one tell us who saw these poor victims that camp conditions were exaggerated! It was one of the most pathetic phases of the war that these should die with liberty within their grasp. Some of them, emaciated, bruised and dirty, passed out almost at once, delirious, or unable to tell their names. Others were able to realize they were in British hands, and to speak a message for a loved one. One who recovered said a very true word, describing the state of disorder he had witnessed: "Sister, it is a month too soon!" That Germany should have been spared bombardment, and their civilians never have seen war on their own soil, has affected the mentality of the nation ever since. And how the French, on whose homes and families such horrors were inflicted, could march through their own mangled land, and then into a Germany of flower-decked cottages, undisturbed gardens, normal life of towns, and stolen property, and not ravage as they went, is a marvellous tribute to a civilized restraint which none other of the Allies was

called upon to exhibit in the same measure. Unfortunately it was little we could do for many of the ex-prisoners, but it gave us happiness to minister to them in the smallest degree. It is to be feared that they were not sufficiently provided for in the Armistice terms, after a long experience of what to expect.

The unprepared-for converging on Valenciennes of so many troops, so many sick, and the state of the roads had caused a food shortage. Nothing could be bought in the town, and the fatigue parties had only one meal a day for a time. As hospital trains were often cancelled to relieve the railway, it followed that evacuation, so much needed, was greatly delayed. The Place was choked with hundreds of lorries, peasant hand-carts, and returning refugees, with little bundles of all their worldly goods, sitting apathetically on the pavements, gazing at nothing. On December 5th, the King, accompanied by the Prince of Wales and Prince Albert drove through the town with the Headquarters' Staff and French Generals, the inhabitants pressing upon the cars, and running after them, while flags were attached to all the crumbling masonry that could be made to hold them.

It is unfortunate to have to record that everything in our vicinity seemed to go to pieces after the Armistice. The "Push" once halted was never resumed with any force or determination. It was natural that such should be the case among the actual fighting men, who were now released. But the relaxation spread to each department, and whole groups of individuals made a sort of holiday of the rest of "active service". Hospital equipment was left behind, supplies not kept up, and linen practically ceased to be issued. Requests met with the senseless reply: "The war is over", and we had some of the sickest cases of the years, and buried men at Mons who had enlisted in 1914, and escaped fatal wounds. Again a Florence Nightingale in authority was needed in the worst way.

No. 32 British C.C.S. took over from us on Dec. 9th., and we moved up to historic Mons. The flat Belgian country stretched before us mile on mile, with the unusual relief of trees and green grass, somewhat spoiled by the enormous, ugly slag heaps. The railway line had been very systematically destroyed, the third rail pulled up on each side at alternating intervals. One section we saw fantastically twisted in the air until it entered a third storey window. "Camouflaged" vehicles, lorries and screens lined both sides of the road, where they had been thrust by our advancing armies, showing that the enemy retreat would have become a rout, if it had been followed into Germany. Abandoned German guns in quantities lay by the way, and the acceleration of the retreat was visible by the fact that there was no more

destruction. There had been no time at the last, and as the enemy intended to retain Belgium they did not treat it as they did France. The villages looked normal, trams were running, people moved about freely, and that gloomy air of loss and disaster was absent. Over the Flemish cobble-stoned street traffic moved noisily, and in the distance beyond a winding canal, rose the ancient Belfry of Mons, topping a conical hill. Canadian troops were billeted in the town, and ever since their entry on the morning of the Armistice, had been very popular.

The Proclamation of freedom still was posted on the Hotel de Ville:

“A la Population de Mons: Après 51 mois de souffrance causées by l’occupation inique, impitoyable et insolente de l’armée allemande, la ville de Mons est enfin délivrée par l’heroism de l’armée britannique, qui à l’heure de l’armistice termine la série de ses victoires dans les lieux même ou le 23 août 1914, elle entra en contact avec l’ennemi. La 3m division canadienne, au prix de lourds sacrifices, a pénétré dans la ville à trois heures du matin, vengeance ainsi, par un éclatant succès, la retraite de 1914. GLOIRE et RECONNAISSANCE A ELLE. L’armistice est signé. L’armée allemande a capitulé. La justice et le droit triomphent. La Belgique sort grandie et fortifiée de la terrible epreuve qu’elle a traversée. . . .”

The main streets remained beflagged for two months, testifying to the joy of the inhabitants, and every window held portraits of their King and Queen, Generals of the Allies, and many little articles made in secret for the returning tide of war, and the pocket money of the rescuers. Even Union Jacks (not always regulation) had been sewn together in anticipation of the approaching day, and were proudly run up. Shell-cases beautifully decorated were on sale in a week, and the Maple Leaf formed a popular motif on brass souvenirs.

There was little coal and no gas, so ‘lights out’ still sounded at 8 P.M., and candles did duty as best they might. The Sisters were accommodated in a Belgian officer’s house, and the Hospital was in the Ursuline Convent, about a mile away, under the Belfry, which still had its German look-out close by. The enemy medical corps had left their part of the Convent in a disgraceful state, and it required thorough cleaning before use. It was an inconvenient place, and not much attempt was made to render it comfortable for the many serious cases of ‘Flu that came from the troops in the vicinity, and our local regiments, Canadians. Pillows were at a premium, and the

garret on the 4th. storey became a dormitory for 50 men, lying on the floor in their uniforms.

It was very cold in the houses, and no heat but small coal-oil stoves. Snow lay on the ground, and the long, grey boulevards circling the town stretched foggy and silent. Rain and mud, hideous, squelching mud, were the alternatives, and made the narrow dark streets a quagmire. Several times every day the Dead March (unused during the war) could be heard, leading a procession to the Municipal Cemetery, three volleys rang out sharply, adding a still more melancholy note to the futile aftermath of those first days. Conversations with some of the bourgeois enlightened us as to details of the enemy occupation. They asked us if Ypres were really destroyed. All news had been uncertain, though the little sheet, "La Libre Belgique", concealed in stockings, and what-not, circulated somehow all those years. When in 1918 one airman dropped leaflets, anyone daring to pick them up was shot. My host's son in the cyclist corps left in August, 1914, and no word reached them till at Armistice he returned safely. They pointed out the corner where the Old Contemptibles returned the first shots of the German invaders on that Sunday afternoon of August 23rd. 1914. . . so long ago. . . and in some back yards still lay the graves of the first English killed or wounded carried in under cover of night, who "died not knowing how the day had gone".

The old town cemetery of Mons holds the dust of friend and foe, and is an epitome of tragedy, but also of a final justification. I took photos of the series of graves which are I believe unique. First there are, or were then, the thin, plain crosses over the British dead of Aug. 23rd. 1914. Nearly all of these were nameless, picked up, buried, and commemorated by the citizens. "Inconnu". . . . "Ici repose en paix un Soldat Anglais, mort au champ d'honneur". . . "Un Soldat Belge, mort pour la patrie" read the inscriptions. Then came the long rows of prisoner dead—also nameless. The old Belgian caretaker told me, bodies were sent up every morning from the hospitals, piled in carts, without clothing or identity marks—truly the refinement of 'hate', the only refinement known to the enemy. British prisoners were the grave-digging party, and more than once had no food supplied for three days. The old man and another smuggled a little soup to them, but had very little themselves, and were afraid of being found out. In front of the prisoners, the third row, were seven graves, and the difference was striking. They had garlands of flowers on them, and two great standing wreaths, half snow-covered. Wide satin ribbons from the Burgomaster of Mons and other officials, inscribed with words of gratitude of the citizens for deliverance on Nov. 11th. 1918, encircled them. These seven alone had had a military and civic funeral, and were buried with honour. They were the boys who had

fallen on the morning of the Armistice, in the moment of victory, carrying the Flag to the front again, wiping out the Retreat.

Our Canadians must have felt a thrill in those last days that it had been reserved for them to retake the city which symbolized invasion, breaking of treaties, and the British answer, opening with the skirmish which marked the first contact for us with the war.

“Did the Ghosts of Old Contemptibles march unseen beside them, Up the old Rue Nationale, and back to Mons again?”

I think the Old Contemptibles welcomed the Maple Leaf that day with equality of comradeship, and there in the keeping of Mons lie men of the Old army, the prisoners, and the representatives of Overseas’ Empire, awaiting, with the sense of duty done, the last “Assembly”. A proud sight for us was the 2nd Canadian Division passing through to the Rhine, every button burnished, harness jingling, pipes playing, they clanked through all one day. It was, of course *raining*, and the everlasting mud spattered gun carriages and great coats.

Walking some miles outside Mons one day I had a talk with a girl in an estaminet who had seen the first fighting at Frameries. On the second day the dwellers in nearby houses had made coffee and carried it to the British soldiers in the shallow trenches thrown up in the night; then suddenly all was retreat, rifle shots, machine guns and artillery. She related how the grey hordes of Germans had marched past day and night for over a week. An engineer officer had occupied a room in their house several times on his way to and from the front, and his repeated boast was the Paris objective—“nach Paris”. When in October scores of guns and regiment after regiment passed along the same road headed *east*, the populace looked on with undisguised satisfaction. By a coincidence, she happened to be standing at the door when their quondam lodger passed for the last time, weary, bedraggled, and haggard, in the midst of a hurriedly retreating company. She could not help waving an arm to him, crying: “Surely Monsieur has lost his direction *Nach Paris?*”

Le Cateau, scene of the famous stand made by the worn-out rearguard under General Smith-Dorrien, on Aug. 26th. 1914, during the “Retreat”, was a very few miles to the south. “Sir John French’s headquarters were at Le Cateau when guns ushered in the dawn of Monday, Aug. 24th. 1914. The Old Contemptibles were fighting at Mons. As their line was beaten back, we heard tales of Hun hordes pressing south in overwhelming numbers, and of the wonderful charge of the 9th. Lancers and 4th. Dragoon Guards. The streets of Le Cateau began to be blocked with all manner of troops and

transport. Then came the enforced rearguard action of the 26th., from dawn through two thirds of a sultry day. How magnificently the Infantry Divisions, the Cavalry and Artillery fought! Wave on wave of Germans came on to be mowed down by the steady and accurate fire of the best soldiers the world has ever seen. Then the further retreat that night. But the army was saved, and civilization saved with it. The Huns have held Le Cateau through four long years. *But British Cavalry rode down its streets yesterday.*" (Frederic Coleman, 1918.)

Further south at Néry, near Compiègne, occurred the deathless stand of the Gunners of "L" Battery, R.H.A. on Sept. 1st., the last day of the retreat. I found that it was only ten miles or less to a spot where the British and French had fought each other in 1794, and the Duke of Marlborough's victory of Malplaquet was won at a village almost in the outskirts. British soldiers had once before been billeted in Mons, and the town had suffered no less than nine sieges with varying fortunes, since, tradition says, Caesar built a fort on the hill. That its latest historic picture should have been the entry of the Canadians into the Grande Place in peace and amity, military and civic pride mingled in an ecstasy of rejoicing, was the very modern edition of what their Flemish ancestors in the past had seen and written in their records.

One day four of us drove to Brussels, that splendid city of vistas and great erections. No wonder the Germans desired to make it theirs. And so, during the four years, they destroyed nothing—but human lives. The magnificent Palais de Justice and other public buildings had been prepared for blowing up, but the invaders had to get away too hurriedly. I remember that day was the date when Belgians were allowed for the first time to use flour for pastry, and we were amazed to see *cakes* in the Restaurant where we had lunch. We had almost forgotten such luxuries, but did not neglect to sample them.

In the afternoon we drove to Louvain, and saw the remains of one of the earliest crimes. Snow lay on the tiles of the "Hall of Lost Footsteps", roofless to the sky. The beautiful St. Pierre Cathedral was a pathetic spectacle, because traces of its wrecked art stood up among the ruins. The fire they said was started in 13 places, and burned for 8 days, 200 houses being destroyed. The square in front of the station had a long earth mound in it; under it we were told lay more than a hundred citizens massacred together. Yet there are persons of both sexes living thousands of miles away, whose safety and comfort have never been disturbed, who think the Belgians and French should not remember these things!!

## BATTLEFIELDS OF THE “SALIENT”.

Here where the village lies a smouldering heap  
They fought their final fight whose task is done;  
Nor shall the strife of armies break their sleep  
Whose crown of faithful service has been won.  
Here day by day in matchless hardihood  
The thin and dwindling line held ever fast,  
Bent, but unbroken yet, it stemmed the flood  
Until our darkest hour was overpast.

Honour to those who in our later day  
Have won with France once more that sacred soil,  
Who at one mighty stroke have swept away  
The fruit of years of foemen's laboured toil.  
But in our hour of triumph o'er our foes  
We know the victors' proudest thoughts will be  
Not of their hard-won laurels, but of those  
Who kept the gateway leading to the sea.

“Messines” by “TOUCHSTONE.”  
*in Punch.*

## XVII

### THE BATTLEFIELDS AFTER THE ARMISTICE.

A four days' tour of the Battlefields of the "immortal Salient" was made possible to two of us in March, 1919, before hospitals in France closed. We bought a one franc ticket from Boulogne to Calais, which was not collected, and the rest of transportation cost us nothing. We reached Hazebrouck on a dark, rainy evening, and put up at the station hotel. It was pitch-black in the courtyard, and there were not even candles to light us to bed. In the morning we discovered that most of the roof was off, and only four rooms habitable, the ceiling of the one we had slept in being temporary, corrugated iron. The enemy had been within six miles the previous year, and the town was a wreck. Refugees were back in a patched up room here and there, and this Sunday morning a Mass was again being said in the shelled church.

We went by train to Poperinghe over the battlefield, rusty guns, trenches full of water, and débris of war had not yet been touched. One dismantled gun had a pile of empty cases just as they had fallen beneath the breech. We passed a C.C.S. with new-made graves thick around its door, and had a vision of the disputed Mont des Cats, and its ruined monastery. Scattered cemeteries marked hurried burial after action behind the lines by night. At Poperinghe we took a look at "Toc H" house—one of the bright spots of the war, and were invited to an al fresco lunch at the Women's First Aid Yeomanry Corps Field Ambulance. (the 'Fannies') One of them was lying under a car adjusting and cleaning for a run up to Ypres, in response to an order. She took us with her up that sacred nine miles of tree-lined road that led to the "inviolable line", that road over which 500,000 men had trudged, and not returned. From Flamertinghe on only stumps of trees remained, the fields on each side were densely marked by shell-holes, and afar off the gaunt spectre of the Cloth Hall appealed to heaven. We crossed into the ruins by 'Bridge 10', and drove into the shattered Grande Place, where at that moment a rainbow very impressively arched the fallen Menin Gate and the stricken field beyond.

Our "Fanny" friend deposited us here, and we had not an idea as to how we should proceed farther. After viewing the remains of the once beautiful, mediaeval building, and being shown the spot where 44 men of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry were buried by one shell beneath the cloisters, also climbing over the fallen columns of St. Martin's Cathedral, of which

only the western arch remained, we walked over the deserted tracks, once streets, and the prison and sugar factory recalled to us names and details in connection with English and Canadian defenders, through four long years. A solitary chimney had "YPRES" painted on it in huge letters, and warning signs, direction posts and old dug-out entrances met us at every turn. The Grande Place had been fairly cleared; in one corner two men, Old Contemptibles, in the service of the Imperial War Graves' Commission, were using a large shelter as a dwelling, in which they had stored 'souvenirs', many picked up as they went about their gruesome, but comradely task. Chaplains attended daily from the 5th. Army Hdqrs., and read the Committal Service over the newly-made graves in the Cemetery.

In the centre of the town ruins was the British cemetery, which already seemed of large extent, but now vies with Etaples for size. It was the commonly accepted idea then that Ypres would never be rebuilt, surrounded as it was by half a million dead, ground impregnated with gas and chemicals, quagmire and decay. Otherwise it hardly seems likely that this cemetery in the centre of a small community would have been selected. English, Scottish, Australians, Canadians and many men of almost every Unit sleep together in that sad but famous acre. A transport wagon, with a faded flag awaited Monday morning, and resumption of a duty which in some areas of battle is not yet finished. (800 bodies were found during 1931 in the Somme district!) "Ypres stands a mere skeleton of a city, curiously swept and clean, but incredibly silent. We came before the broken Cloth Hall as pilgrims before a holy shrine. Very lonely it stands, lonely as death, plain as the path of duty, monumental as that which gave it place, and purpose and meaning forever here."

The British military policeman in the square, to whom we had explained our intentions, now signalled to us, and we found that several London buses, looking extraordinarily out of place, had brought officers from Lille on a tour of the Salient, had seats to spare, and would be delighted to take two Sisters along. We threaded our way through sandbags, and fragments of red walls, over the half-filled moat through the gate of Dickebusch. Crosses leaned everywhere singly and in groups on the Canal bank. From the open bus top we had an excellent view for miles over one of the most horrible scenes of desolation in the world's history. On one side of the road a large hollow contained about 30 graves, but the water and mud almost submerged the mounds, a cross here and rifle there, surmounted by a tin hat, crookedly reflected in the marsh. "Some rest camp!" said the officer in front of me. Our way lay between Messines and Mount Kemmel, and the view from the

latter must have been valuable to the holders during those years. Stumps of trees were the only things standing, beside crosses, above the morass.

Several times we passed large areas marked "Cemetery", but not a trace remained of memorial or mound. These had been shelled and reshelled, and must have presented an insoluble problem to the Graves' Commmission. (The "Missing" numbered 517,771, out of a total of 1,104,890 British dead in all fields, and their "Names live forever" on the great common memorials erected in four chosen spots, but especially on that noble and simple Menin Gate, the British gift to Ypres, where nightly still the Last Post is sounded. Let no man or woman of our Race ever forget that for the liberty of all our generations "the British armies stood here four years.") A uniform lay in one mud hole, a boot in another, but farther along, right on the roadway was a neat Australian grave, with a regimental design and border of white pebbles, evidently carried recently from some back-area. The most pitiable sight we noticed was a half-uncovered stretcher, with a blanketed form partly visible. The sinking of the soil and spring rains had washed away earth and stones, but of what hasty retreat or wiping out of a night working party did that lone stretcher tell? In one long wide trench 300 were interred, said a notice-board. We became so oppressed by the vast, level plain of death, that it seemed hard to believe any had escaped alive, that it was not the graveyard of a country.

At Neuve Eglise the church lay shattered amidst the rubbish of homes to which it had ministered, and the village cemetery here had been torn up, tombs smashed open, coffins crushed, a skull disclosed, head-stones lying cracked in two, and grey dust over all. One remembered, as each ruined church was passed, that it was in them that the wounded were collected, especially in French sectors, and one dimly visualized the shambles they became before the day ended; 2626 churches were destroyed. To the east of the road Ploegstreet was pointed out, only a few blackened trees remaining. Bailleul was another skeleton city, but looked more as if fire had swept through it, as many walls were standing, but each house roofless, windows gone, and mouldering furniture lying in heaps.

Enormous craters abounded along this road turning east toward Armentières, which was considerably worse than Bailleul. Here, as we drove through in approaching dusk, we could see a few people returned to the demolished town. Where a lower room still boasted a ceiling, they slept on the floor, had stretched a tarpaulin or corrugated sheet over an open space for day use. One meagre shelter had chalked up "Estaminet" on a blank wall! One guttering candle sputtered in these vague interiors, a few boxes

seemed the only furnishing, and sometimes a face gazed out through canvas-covered gaps that had been windows, at the other human beings who had ventured into No Man's land. Not one thing had been touched otherwise since the 10th. November, over these wastes, since pandemonium had given place to quietness; no one, we gathered, had trod the Salient during that cold and silent winter. We saw it exactly as battle had left it. Several German internment camps had been established nearby, till full exchange of prisoners could take place, and the men were starting a systematic clearing of military salvage. (One wished the ex-Kaiser's family, the high command and Junkers might have been among them.) They looked lazy, well fed and churlish, and I have never heard of any gratitude for the lenient treatment on the part of the British forces. Chinese labour battalions also were marching back to quarters, having spent the day retrieving equipment and metal from the mud, and piling it up in dumps. We noticed one most moving incident. An old peasant had a lean-to, like a dog-kennel, in what had been a yard. Only the chimney of the former house stood, and a blue and white tiled path had led to the front door. Curiously, nearly three feet of it was intact, and he was collecting bits of tiles, and fitting them into place. There was not another soul in sight for miles, and he never looked at the three bus loads of uniforms. He must have been mad, the fate of his family unknown perhaps, or scenes of horror seared into his brain forever. Later, we saw little groups of refugees, hopelessly pointing out uncertain localities, or standing in silent misery about a few yards of broken ground, their little bundles fallen there, as with bowed heads they contemplated a hearth identified.

Lille was reached at dinner time, after a journey that had left ineffaceable impressions. A young aviator joined us at dinner at l'hôtel de l'Europe, and described some of the exploits of the Air Force just before Armistice. He said he had a scheme for bombing Berlin, which could have been accomplished, though he probably would have had to descend in Holland and be interned. He had urged this through "the proper channels" for many months, finally receiving permission to make the attempt on Saturday, Nov. 9th., immediately followed by orders to "stand fast"!

Lille gave us a good idea of a town held under the iron hand of the Germans for so long. The inhabitants seemed hardly to realize that they were free. The long, empty streets were lifeless. Windows were blank, and many shuttered, as if besieged or terrorized. Few commodities were for sale, everything had been commandeered, and no one had dared to protest. All young civilians had been claimed for labour, and one night hundreds of young women had been carried away by the brutal soldiery, amid heart-rending scenes. "None have returned", said my informant. "Alas! most of

them no doubt are dead, and for the rest. . . .” When one thinks of the difference in the occupation of Cologne, Coblenz, Bonn and Mainz one can only characterize the German invaders as true descendants of their Hun ancestors.

Next A.M. we were advised to apply to the Town Major, H.D.Q. the 5th. Army, for leave to go up to the Salient by lorry or ambulance. All these had left however, but, to our surprised gratitude, a Ford car was supplied us, with a driver who was an original member of the “Princess Pat’s”. This was unexpected luck, and a thrilling ten hours followed. The landscape of the day before was repeated, but from Menin to Ypres no trace remained of anything but battlefield, for the fight never shifted from the Salient from first to last. At Tournai on the retreat the enemy had blown up the great bridge, which had fallen sideways across the stream. “One cannot help wondering if they warned those who lived in the vicinity. Scarcely a house remains nearby. One refuses to conjure up a scene of midnight horror, of a sudden explosion involving a whole locality in destruction. One hopes, rather than feels, that even the Germans may have had a limit.”

The ground we had read of daily, and that had been the theatre of the intense and unremitting struggle for the Channel ports, lay before our eyes, the pathway over the graves of half a million dead. It was a panorama which staggered the imagination and memory. There was an immense German cemetery outside Menin, the little low, grey crosses in close, military formation, as if each man had been laid “at attention”. Further on, where many single and grouped graves of 1914, British regiments of the old army, in what had then been the front line. There was a huge crater, like a lake, and thousands of smaller ones, all coated with green, metallic-looking scum, miasma breeding. A large mound at intervals was marked “Horse buried here”. A little collection of crosses on a hillock seemed miraculously to have escaped direct hits. German concrete “pill-boxes” were battered, but a number had survived.

I had a pre-war local map with me, and from this, calculating distance as best we could, and the driver’s intuition, I was extremely keen to recognize the remains of Gheluvelt. . . . that very historic spot of the repulse of the enemy onslaught, when there remained only one man to 7 yards of trench, and the enemy could have broken through if they had known it. But they declared under oath afterwards that the British trenches were filled with large reinforcements! The only explanation is the vision of some who lived to tell it. . . . of Spirit forces aligned here as at Le Cateau for the cause of Right. The detailed descriptions given by soldiers (before they ever heard of

a writer's fanciful but quite different tale in England), and the personal stories of both officers and men who saw the "Angels of Mons" between the armies, convinces me at any rate that they were not hallucinations. But Gheluvelt was no more. A small heap of rubble by the side of the road, about the size of a room, was passed, and as there were some vestiges of a cross-road which might correspond with the map, we paused to look round, and found a fallen sign-post: "Gheluvelt". It affected me more than anything else I saw. To the south wound the trenches of the gallant 7th Division, and the Guards, who held them at terrible cost, a magnificent charge of the Worcesters recapturing them at a very critical moment. In parts they were intact, in others the parapet had been smashed in, and a tangle of weeds, wire and junk made them impassable. I think they should have been preserved forever under cover, like the "Tranchée des Baionettes" et Verdun. Their lines should never have been obliterated in a cow pasture. One felt that they ranked with all desperate charges, all glorious moments, all undying deeds in the history of the Race. It was a great privilege to have seen them as the "forlorn hope" of heroes left them on Oct. 31st, 1914. I believe a small memorial now marks the cross-roads.

Soon we came upon about 30 tanks, wallowing in all sorts of positions in the mud, looking like uncouth prehistoric beasts, and the wreckage of an aeroplane by the roadway. Sanctuary Wood once was south of the road near here, but not a stump marked the site. The remains of the Roulers' Railway were passed at "Hell-fire Corner." Hooze and Hill 60 (how many relays of patients had come from that sinister spot) also had entirely disappeared. The enemy always had the rim of the saucer-like terrain in front of Ypres, the British below them. The graves hereabouts were nearly all officers, names of renown. Many Canadian officers also fell not far off, to the right of the line in June, 1916. Through the yawning breach that had been the old Menin Gate, we gained the town, from the east this time, and returning to the right of the Place, drove in the direction of St. Jean, sacred to the memory of our countrymen. No trace of it remained however, but the driver showed us points that used to be "unhealthy" in his day, and for many other days. "Shrapnel Corner", "Wind-up Corner", "Salvation Corner" still bore their labels. A very bad corduroy road passed through the vacant ground, once St. Julien, that name on every Canadian's lips one past week. As a Canadian one was proud to be in that spot for a moment, where fame in arms was won for our country, and not a small part contributed to a tremendous Imperial and world task. Our Princess Pat's man pointed out the ridge where the first gas attack was launched, and the road where the P.P.C.L.I. was cut up, but he

confessed the field had changed so much since 1916, that he found it hard to get his bearings.

One remembered some lines read after that second battle for Calais:

“You say that the First Contingent  
Are dolts, and rotters, and snydes;  
The dregs of the nation’s manhood,  
And a whole lot besides;  
We ruined your reputation,  
But you must admit we’re men,  
We held the line for the Empire  
We fought at St. Julien”.

“The guns were recaptured by a deed of the Canadian troops which will fill the heart of the Motherland with love and pride. The Canadians advanced with magnificent steadiness. . . . No words can express the gratitude of the nation to the great Dominion for this valour of her sons”. “One topic has this week absorbed all our thoughts and conversation, the magnificent effort of the Canadian Division in Flanders, which saved Ypres from capture, and the Allies from possibly an overwhelming defeat. The Canadians held on with grim courage under terrible shell-fire and a dense cloud of poison gas. . . . The Empire unites in sorrow for their dead, and shares the pride in Canadian gallantry.”

(English Press)

Cemeteries were thick on each side of the road now, the last resting-places of these boys from Ontario and Quebec, Manitoba and the West, and the provinces by the sea. Langemarck was off to the north, but could not be reached, as the road was broken up at this point, and the rest squelchy mud, that no one had stood on for a year. With difficulty getting the car turned round, we retraced our way, through “Danger” signs, to the Grande Place, and then turned to the left again into the northern Salient as far as Zonnebeke. About a mile off we saw Paschendaele Ridge, but had no time to go nearer. A Sister told us the next day that that mile was the worst of the whole area, bodies scarcely being covered, and many washed down the slope. It was a most shocking sight, and to be avoided. The men who fell there numbered: Great Britain, 321,616, Australia, 31,301, Canada, 16,404.

We now, following my obsolete map, attempted to take a cross-road that used to run from here to Gheluvelt, and seemed passable, though very

rough. It proved to be merely a succession of shell-holes. We passed the site of Polygon Wood without knowing it, and after climbing over mud banks and falling into deep ruts, finally slid into a shell-hole, and stayed there! We disembarked a third time, but thirty minutes' efforts were useless. It was, needless to say, raining! completing the usual picture of the district to all who served in it. We were miles from anywhere that was habitable. To our satisfaction two Belgian peasants hove in sight from the south, and combined action of the men rescued the Ford. But they told us progress towards the Menin Road was impossible, as this section was cut to pieces from here on.

While the car was being extricated, my companion and I walked a quarter of a mile along the road, and saw the sign, "Becelaere". Skeletons of horses lay thickly about, as well as rotting and rusty gun limbers and wheels. I remarked that this spot must have been the scene of the last open fighting in 1914, when field artillery and cavalry were used, before the stalemate of trench warfare. As soon as I had access to information I found that this was the case, that we had actually stood on the spot which had for months been the very apex of the Salient, where lives had been sacrificed to save the guns, where Byng's Cavalry charged, and about half a mile farther, would have passed the scene of the Worcester's recapture of the front line in the First Battle for Calais. However it was getting dark, and impossible to reach Lille to catch the train. It seemed hopeless, to turn round and go through Ypres to Poperinghe at that late hour, and we resigned ourselves to overstaying our leave by a day. Our driver also had only been loaned for the day, and had a long way to return to Lille. However, being a "Princess Pat", "he wouldn't hear of seeing Sisters 'stuck'", and insisted on driving us straight to Hazebrouck, where the train was due at 8 P.M. I forget how many miles we did in one and a half hours, but it was a wild ride. Fortunately, there was no traffic the whole way. We tore through villages, whizzed round corners and past mile-posts at about 60 miles per hour, and after what the car had done that day, it was marvellous nothing flew off. We saw faces at windows and doors opened as our approach was heard, and we shot past. . . . another declaration of war perhaps, the inhabitants must have surmised. The train was already puffing at the platform, but we had six minutes to spare!

Boulogne had gone to bed. . . . in peace, to make up some of its lost sleep. No cabs, no ambulances, no one about, trams stopped, and it was 1 A.M. With what energy we could muster, we started up the long, long hill to the hospital. . . . one more long way to Tipperary. . . . in the dark, carrying, for my part, three shell-cases, and a piece of the Cloth Hall! IT WAS RAINING!

\* \* \* \* \*

One more crossing of the Channel; chains taken up, buoys gone, no escort of destroyers, and ships going about their peaceful business after the four years' reign of frightfulness.

The Great War was over!

## FIRST VISIT TO THE BATTLEFIELDS. 1918.

“Armentières—Ypres. . . the line which for four years kept inviolate the Channel ports. Here is ground holy to Briton and Canadian alike. . . The solitudes of these old battlefields lie now lone beyond any of the waste places of the earth. To break in upon it is to disturb the early rest of the dead; to walk is to walk over their graves. . . strangely quiet lie the old heroic places, sombre, and still and chill in the November mist. Desert and empty are the fields that were but lately ‘No Man’s Land’, and may not possibly, be any man’s land anymore. . . huge pits and wild depressions, craters, where water stands green and stinking, tangled grasses, sudden caves, those giant furrows, mile upon mile, north and south, in which men lived, fought and died. . . We came to Ypres via Menin. Is there any place in France or Flanders that has seen bloodier fighting than those last few kilometres of the road running from Hooze into Ypres? Here, through the terrible April of 1916 raged the struggle for the craters of St. Eloi, while south of it in June of the same year was fought the long battle for Sanctuary Wood and Observatory Ridge.” V.A.H.

## GOOD-BYE TO THE SALIENT. 1918.

“Our old friend the Salient is no more. We have lost it amid the gains of our advance. Ypres without the Salient which has made it famous for four years, will be strange country to the army which fought and suffered there. . . No other place has such memories; no other place enshrines so much of British valour and self-sacrifice. . . The old city was the first in the battle-line to give its life for the Allied cause; to-day its broken frame and pierced heart testify to the price paid for the victory. Every road, every turning, every feature in the Salient is full of memories and history for the British Army.” X.

## DEVILRY IN THE BACK-AREAS.

“All through the back-areas, not alone in those devastated, twice-fought-over areas where the grip of contending armies had torn everything to pieces, but in the country most recently delivered, there lies side by side with evidences of German organization . . . their numbering of the houses, their light railways, their guide posts, their air-raid shelters. . . there lies also the evidences of German devilry. Unless it has been actually seen, the extent and diabolical thoroughness of it all is unbelievable. Not the humblest cottage has gone unscathed. What the fire has spared, the axe has

demolished, what fire and axe could not do, has been destroyed by an explosive charge. It is not the desolation of the land, horrible as that is, that seizes the heart so much as the knowledge that this orgy of destruction, this mile upon mile, area upon area, of habitations wiped out is the work of human hands. . . . for whom no penalty can be too exacting, no punishment too severe, no peace terms too drastic. And as one sees the little families of refugees creeping painfully along the pavé, pushing before them their few poor belongings in a handcart, one wishes with the tyrant of old, that the German nation had but one neck.”

## HOME TO FREEDOM.

“But there are other figures, moving in the opposite direction, in little bodies of three or four, slowly, painfully, wearily. Dressed, too, in the oddest costumes. . . . a German cap surmounted a khaki shirt. . . . a ragged coat of a peasant, above an equally ragged pair of khaki trousers; strange figures, nondescript, neither soldier nor civilian, little bundles carried in coloured handkerchiefs. Their faces pinched and colourless, the iron of German slavery still heavy upon their souls, downcast and dogged, as if all their strength were concentrated on the one purpose of footing it back to Blighty. British prisoners on the first of the final stages of their journey to freedom.”

ANGELS OF MONS.  
(Mons & Ypres 1914)

They say it's just that folk have flocked  
To glorify a pretty tale;  
It may be truth that Something blocked  
That desperate battle trail,  
And anyhow the story's growing stale.

But true or not, there's this is right,  
Sure as man lives and murder's done,  
Fate never mixed another fight  
Since wars were first begun  
With so much freedom to be lost or won.

And swearing Tommies beaten back  
But rallying still their broken line  
Against the howling Prussian pack  
May not have seemed divine,  
But still did heroes' work, and did it fine.

Whether they saw the shining crew,  
St. George and all the rest of it,  
Or only found a job to do,  
And meant to stand their bit,  
Something . . . . or SOMEONE . . . . gave them grip and grit.

“TOUCHSTONE” in Punch.

## XVIII

### CHRISTMAS IN THE WAR.

“Peace. . . to men of Goodwill”  
Grateful Patients.

Certain persons in these latter years like to argue the academic question of the so-called moral anomaly of Christmas, and the celebration of that religious Feast in the midst of War. But Right, Justice, Law must precede Peace and ensue it, and peace at any price is a treacherous doctrine, which leaves the weak at the mercy of the strong, whence they have to be rescued by the world police force, even as it may be again. I quote a newspaper article with which the large majority will agree:

“Nothing could be easier than to draw a contrast between the celebration of the Prince of Peace, and the spectacle of half the world at war. Yet to do so would be merely a literary exercise in the outward appearance of things and not in their realities. If there is any virtue in sacrifice for an ennobling cause, in the spirit that dedicates life itself to that end, in the brotherliness and unity that bear down all barriers, and link rich and poor in a common sympathy and devotion, then the war is not without its redeeming side. Certainly we in the British Empire can lay our hands on the altar and testify that our consciences are clear of any share in the guilt of precipitating this overwhelming calamity.”

All British hospitals, in whatever war zone they happened to be, made the most of the day, and with the participation of the patients usually achieved a festive scene with hand-made streamers, mottos, garlands of green, interspersed with flags. Military routine relaxed, and cheery badinage, songs and goodwill prevailed. There was always one or more wag in every ward, and concerts and vaudeville entertainments were arranged in the “Home” hospitals, and wherever there was a British community.

Our first December 25th. was spent at Le Touquet. We had sent as many patients as possible across the Channel, and the remainder were not too numerous to entertain. On Christmas Eve we gathered in the central hall, and sang carols from the staircase, where they could be heard by the bed-patients, while all who could be up were gathered in wheel chairs and benches on the floor below. This was a surprise feature, and pleased the men as a reminder of the Eve at home. On Christmas morning there was an early

celebration of Holy Communion, to which many came. The patients each received a Canadian Red Cross present from our stores, and were regaled with a good dinner. Instead of the meal on a tray, a long table was set up in each ward, and the men enjoyed most of all the community repast. The Colonel visited every ward, all being gaily decorated, and wished his charges a merry Christmas. The cards sent from the King and Queen to each man were distributed, and Princess Mary's gift box. The British Grocers' Federation contributed individual tins of toffee, decorated with the Flag and portrait of the King, inscribed "To our fighting heroes," while another Firm sent gifts bearing the legend: "Good luck to our 'Contemptible little army' ". So that even the "All-Highest" had part in the merriment of the occasion. Special cakes had been ordered by the sisters from Paris Plage, and were elaborately decorated, and much admired as well as otherwise enjoyed by our soldier guests. A gramophone had arrived from England, and during the afternoon English residents at Le Touquet paid a visit with a present of tobacco, always welcome, and gave a concert in the evening. The day was fine and bright, and cheered the spirits of those who were spending their first Christmas at war. Canadian nurses in Boulogne were invited to dinner at our Mess, and the officers and sisters dined together, with toasts to Canada.

The Christmas of 1915, was very different, and an exception to all others. There was no jollity, for there was no means of marking the Day. Though the Sisters had by that time, through their own efforts, attained some comfort on the Island of Lemnos, and a good dinner was provided in the evening, it was spoiled to a great extent by inability to cater for the patients as well. An order for 100 gifts for my ward had been sent to England in September, and through the kind attention of a friend, immediately selected and forwarded. I believe the packing-cases were actually on the Island and lying in some tent, (as the mail often did) but I never heard of them till after New Year. During the previous night an order had come to get a convoy ready for the Olympic, and the men lay dressed on the beds from 8 A.M., boots and knapsacks beside them, expecting any moment to be called for. It was impossible to tidy the huts, or bring order out of chaos. Dinner time approached, and no ambulances had arrived. It had been understood that a chicken dinner had been procured for each ward, and we prepared to serve it, with what 'trimmings' we could collect. But no fowl appeared; the same scant diet came from the cook-house, and as those supposed to have left, had been "struck off the *strength*", there was even less to go round than usual. The men warned for the ship were fed somehow, but the sisters were miserably disappointed at the fiasco. The trestle table remained empty in its white sheet, and no one had sufficient spirit to jest. Men from the camps

dropped in in the afternoon, and we asked each other if a change in the calendar had been effected, and Dec. 25th. eliminated by the war? It was a blank date on the debit side that we hate to think of. On New Year's Eve the Medical Officers serenaded our lines with Auld Lang Syne at midnight, ships' syrens wakened the echoes of the harbour, and were answered by bugle calls from the camps. Somewhere in the distance a voice sang: "Where my caravan has rested. . .", the words pulsating clearly over the waste spaces. It was a mournful, rather than a hopeful greeting to the opening of the second year of warfare.

Another Christmas of acute discomfort was spent at sea. A convoy of nine ships, guarded by the Calgarian armed as a cruiser, (torpedoed shortly after) had left St. John, N.B. in December, calling at Halifax to embark reinforcements. It was two weeks after the explosion of the Belgian ship in that harbour, and the ruined area of the city presented a forlorn appearance under snow and leaden skies. Troopships and other vessels crowded the port, which played a very important part in the war from the Imperial aspect. The voyage was cold and rough. There were 1500 troops packed like the proverbial sardine between decks on a small ship. Few had ever been on the sea, and 1500 were sea-sick!! They were brought up on deck for two hours compulsory airing every day, while a squad swept up below. The portholes were never opened for twelve days, owing to the seas, there was no space for marching or physical drill, and the boys, for they were all young in 1917, merely stood round in great coats in the cold rain, and kicked their heels. Two brothers always started choruses, and it was really remarkable that anyone could sing.

One's life-belt was an absolute 'order', to be carried constantly, even to meals, and boats were slung out all the voyage. Guards were posted on deck, and look-outs at every angle strained their eyes across the dark, heaving water to detect the first indication of a possible periscope. Boat-drill was insisted upon daily. From the 22nd. to 26th. a stiff gale blew, and from the way the ship rolled, we seemed to be broadside on to the waves. Fog had accompanied us most of the way, and though the Calgarian showed up occasionally, scarcely a ship of the nine was seen after the first forty-eight hours. One of them carried Australians, and had come through the Panama Canal. Dishes, books, furniture, and baggage rattled and crashed unceasingly, and catapulted in stateroom and saloon. Many a time it felt as though that particular roll must be the last. Three sisters in a small stateroom, with port-hole closed and frequently submerged, were violently ill, a condition contributed to by the fact that the last 'cargo' carried had been a Chinese Labour Corps. I believe four passengers partook of

Christmas dinner, but we were not caring, except to forbid mention of the menu!

Destroyers as usual met us punctually off the north of Ireland, and we headed for Liverpool. But we could hear wireless talking at length, and presently we changed course, and coast lights faded. No reason was vouchsafed, and we retired for the night, with curiosity unsatisfied. The immense responsibility of merchant captains, R.N.R., in those hectic days has been fittingly recognized by others, but I cannot forbear to add the recognition of nursing-sisters. We seldom saw them; in the danger zone they rarely left the bridge. A dark figure in oil skins against the sky was all the glimpse the troops got of the man whose calm control and instant decision the safety of all depended. The incessant strain aged these men long before their time, but till the Armistice was signed, and a year after, they brought their ships into the world's ports with colours flying, and if a torpedo sealed its fate, they remained at their posts to the last, averting panic, and upholding the honour of the British name.

Dawn found us to our surprise steaming up the Clyde, to dock at Glasgow. The waterway and its shores were silent, as the New Year's Eve holiday had begun, but crowds of people came running out, cheering and waving as soon as they saw troops on board. The Mauretania and other great ships were embarking stores, or refitting, and their camouflage was really wonderful, another clever idea which proved useful. We then heard that an enemy submarine had been waiting for convoys in the Irish Sea. Failing of their object, by discovery and change of port, they had blown up a pilot boat and seventeen pilots coming to meet us and a South African convoy, before being sunk themselves. After much delay, the men were mustered, and marked off, singing "Tipperary. . . . a long way. . . ." and thinking they already knew something about *that* part of it. We boarded an unheated train about 9 P.M., on one of the coldest New Year's Eves Britain remembered. At some station about 4 A.M. *a cold pork pie* was obtained for sustenance. We were in need of unlimbering on arrival in London at six. The hotels were overwhelmed with soldiers on leave and their relatives, and it was some time before one was found with a bed to spare. I for one slept the clock round.

By 1918, Christmas meant the first reunion for four years to many a family, but to more it meant the loss of either hope or fear. A large number had died from 'Flu before they could get furlough, among them unfortunate prisoners. Other ex-prisoners were lucky enough to have that horrible experience behind them. The detachments of the Allied forces on the Rhine

were celebrating in Germany for a change. On the various fronts people had almost forgotten a peace Christmas. No. 4 C.C.S., the Canadian hospital unit in Mons, decorated their section of the Ursuline Convent, and held a banquet in the evening for officers and sisters. The other personnel were not forgotten and the patients had a good dinner, but we had several dying of pneumonia, and the day was devoid of any joyous demonstration. Carols were sung in the evening, and a red and white motto adorned the wall: "Good-bye Belgium, Good-bye France." On New Year's Eve, Sir David Watson, commanding the 4th. Canadian Division, gave a ball in the Hôtel de Ville of Brussels, which was honoured by the presence of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. Allowing for the fact that it was after instead of before battle, and differences in circumstances of this century, it was quite in the Waterloo tradition. . . .

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Some extracts from the dozens of letters received from soldiers may be of interest. "Tommy" of the old army invariably prefaced his remarks by the formula, "hoping this finds you well as it leaves me at present. . . ."

"The Canadian Sisters are the best scouts we ever knew."

"The Canadian Sisters are like a fellow's own sisters."

Bristol, 1914.

"I'm sure I am, and I can say all the others are very grateful for care and kindness shown us during our stay in the Canadian hospital. England is going on as usual. They give us a good reception here. They think a lot of Tommy now."

Edinburgh, 1915.

"Everyone wishes they were back at Le Touquet. No one likes the food here. I am not grumbling, only comparing the two hospitals. D.R. and B. are all here, and looking forward to the time when they will let us out. You may see us again sometime."

Norwich, 1914.

"I know you want to hear how we got on. . . . I feel well in myself, but what with so much moving and all the wound opened again, and I had a lot of pain out of it last night. They say your doctor done a good job on it. I told them except for the Canadians I would not ha' got home. R. and M. are here too, and they are going to write. When Fritz is finished some of us would like to go to Canada I expect."

York, 1915.

"My parents and I feel that we should like to express our gratitude to at least one of those who with such real sympathy tend the wounded in France. In my brother's letters he speaks in glowing terms of the untiring care and kindness of doctors and nurses."

Soldier's Sister.

Base Camp, Oct. 1915.

"I passed the Hotel du Golf on a march this week, and if the Canadian Sisters are still there, you must be exhausted, if going

the same pace as last Christmas. I'd like to run over and have a look at the old 'Home' before we get up round Loos again. I have not seen a hospital to touch No. 2. How are Miss. . . and Miss. . .? You see I have not forgotten the earthly angels there. And I'd like to be remembered to the orderlies, please. They were good chaps."

London, 1915.

"I want to thank you on behalf of myself and my parents for your kindness, which made my stay at Le Touquet so pleasant, and your persistence which got my name on the 'Blighty' list, and enabled me to see my home once more."

Somewhere in France, 1914.

"It has rained without cessation for three weeks, and we are all walking round like animated mud pies. . . . We hope that many a fellow will live to thank you for your good services, as did that bunch o' kids at. . . ."

Base Details, Boulogne, 1915.

"The place we are quartered at is called the 'Destructor', and if we stay here long it will destroy us. The walls are stone, the floor is stone, the ceiling is stone, and the general atmosphere is stoney. . . . Well, Sister, I sat in our domicile to-day, and nearly wept tears as large as a dollar piece when I thought what I had left at Le Touquet. Never I believe has there been such goodness shown to soldiers since the time of Florence Nightingale. I have been in conversation with many others from hospitals, and I find that there isn't one that is a patch on good old Canadian No. 2. I met H. . . . and had a jaw with him. Subject of conversation, the hospital, of course."

Y.M.C.A. Hut, London, 1915.

"Just a few lines to thank you for the kindness you done for me, but I am very sorry that I left the old No. 1 C.S.H. I wish I was still with you all. I look for you and Sister. . . . before I left, and I could not find niver of you. It made me feel upset, but it could not be help. Give my best respects to the Sisters. I am staying in bed here, what is the matter I don't know. I was as happy as a sandboy on the beach wasin I. . . ."

Folkestone, 1915.

“I suppose you know there are 40,000 Canadians here, and it is pretty lively! We had massed bands in the Park on Dominion Day. There is great talk of a German invasion here. All the poor country people are upset by the special constables telling them what to do, they are to take all their Belongings with them, march 8 miles every day and track for the Midlands, so Sister you are better off in France! I don’t know how to thank you for taking care of me the way you did.”

Base Details, 1915.

“Don’t be surprised to see us come walking back, as we are feeling very much down in the dumps. Would you mind sending a bed each for myself and my brother, as we’ve only got some soft boards to sleep on? We are going to report sick in the morning with shaky knees or something. We have never felt so unhappy as we do now, and if Sisters M. O’L. or Y. knew how horrible it is, they’d come and get us. You were all so very kind to us, and perhaps next time you’ll let us stay a little longer.”

(Two young scamps.)

Southampton, 1915.

“I’m very glad I wasn’t in the tents the night the 300 came, or I would have had to sleep in the chair, and probably I wouldn’t have had that same. But I would like to go back again, as you would not believe the difference (it is something extraordinary) in the hospitals. Of course I shall have to stick it, and say nought. I wish I could see the coast of France from here.”

Cambridge, 1915.

“Just a few lines, hoping to find you enjoying good health as it leaves me pretty well. I can assure you there is a big difference in this hospital and No. 1 Canadian. I feel very lonesome since I left Wimereux. I miss the strawberries. There is a lot of people interested in my oxygen tube. I told them it was a life-saving tube, which needless to say they did not believe me. I am very downhearted, and it took me 2 days, 3 hours and 15 minutes to write this note, so that will tell you the state I am in.”

Gallipoli, 1915.

“Dear Miss. . . .

I don’t know if this is the correct way to address an army Sister who is also a lieutenant, but I hope it is, and if not you’ll forgive me. Things are very quiet at the moment, the only disturbing feature being a nasal and melancholy voice in the next traverse beseeching Daddy not to go down the mine! We had a rotten passage from Mudros, 4 P.M. to 5 A.M., lying off Cape Helles a long time.”

Cairo, 1915.

“I was sorry not to see you to say Good-bye. I take the opportunity now to thank you most sincerely for all the extras, over and above nursing. I could not have had better attention than in No. 1, and the sisters will always live in my memory. Am fairly well looked after here, but have been put back on Milk diet, and am starving.”

Liverpool, 1916.

“So pleased to hear from you, as it leaves me a little better again than I have been feeling of late. There were a new army order last week that everyone has to go to Con Camp from here, so I don’t know when I’ll get home. I am still hanging on to the same greatcoat you got out of stores for me, and I will always keep it. All the best of luck, Sister, and God bless you for all you done for me, when I was so sick, and getting me sent home, like you did.”

Lancashire, 1916.

“You will be pleased to hear I got discharged and am back in the ‘Pit’ again, but find it very hard till I get used to it again. I shall never forget the times we used to have at Lemnos, I have talked about it times many, how bothered and upset the Sisters were at not being able to get what they wanted for the patients. That day I left Sister, I thought I’d never get to the beach at the finish of it. Lots of poor chaps were buried in the sea before long. For all the trouble you and Sister H. took for me, and the care that brought me round, it is thankful I am to you, closing now with the best of luck.”

France, 1915.

“Dear Sister,

I was so pleased to have a letter from you, but what a surprise to find you had got away off to that island. Anyone who knows anything at all of the Canadian Sisters will say that you have earned a long rest. I have a brother in the Navy at Gallipoli, and I only wish if he is wounded he will be sent to a Canadian hospital. I am very much in your debt, as I have said before.”

Scotland, 1915.

“This is a large mansion belonging to Lord. . . . and only one of these temporary hospitals. It is a very nice place, but I would much rather be in Quebec ward. . . . I am very grateful for the skill and kindness received there. Please tell the Sisters I cannot express my thanks enough, also the orderlies, who were always willing and obliging.”

Alexandria, 1916.

“I have often wondered how long you stayed at Lemnos. Although I was pretty sick, I had a good time at your hospital, and cannot help saying that the treatment in the ‘Colonial’ hospitals is far and away better than in our own in many ways. . . . No. 5 Canadian now running the Garrison Hospital at Abassiah are very popular with our boys.”

Sgt., Field Ambulance, R.A.M.C.

On a train, 1914.

“There were some heated arguments on the train as to the respective merits of the. . . . Hospital and the Canadian. Those who had enjoyed the high society of the first lost out each time, for the numbers told, and we squashed them.”

York, 1916.

“I was sorry to hear you were still at Mudros. People do not realize the diseases you have to fight, and the conditions under which you work. We had a very good Christmas here. The ward was a mass of decorations and fresh flowers. Each Tommy had a stocking and a Xmas card. I thought of you and your ward, and could not but picture the contrast. But I know you would all be doing your best for my comrades, even in that forsaken place.”

V.A.D. Hospital, 1917.

Somewhere in England.

“We had a good crossing, but tiresome journey here. . . . 8 hours from Southampton, as there were so many troop-trains. I shall never forget the good old Canadians. It seemed like heaven the first night I arrived there. You get wakened here at 5.00 for a wash, and it is a long day till 8 P.M. when all lights go out, and it is the coldest place ever. The hospital is worked on a different system to the Canadian. There is one Sister to a ward, (a real C.O.) and young V.A.D. ladies, who never ask you to do anything, but give a sharp order. They are not trained and heavy-handed. The first time one touched my feet I jumped, and she said, Are they painful? I never said nothing, but thought all the more. So you see it is not in the same class as the Canadian.”

Derby, 1916.

“You have the deepest thanks and gratitude of my heart for your kind letter to hand bearing reference to my late husband. I feel ever so grateful to the hospital staff for all they did. The loss is irreparable, and I have a great task to face to bring up six children. Would you if possible lay this flower on his grave?”

Essex, 1916.

“Dear Madam,

I am extremely grateful to you for finding time to write particulars of my husband. It was very kind and thoughtful to send for the priest, and a great consolation to us to hear that he died fortified with the last Sacraments. I am sure he had every attention you could give him, but it is very hard he died so far away.”

York, 1919.

“To-day in quaint old York the folk are in the highest pitch of excitement of Peace being signed. It’s glorious to think it’s the Jack and not the German colours that are being run up. There is always that great feeling of satisfaction for those who took part in the real work. . . . ‘Well, I did my best’. A very great tribute is due to our Dominion troops and particularly the Nursing-Sisters who did such wonderful work. I think we fellows who had the misfortune to go into dock for repairs will never forget the great comfort we received at their hands.”

In Memoriam Edith Cavell, and all Nurses who gave  
their lives for the Empire.

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old . . . .  
Age shall not wither them, nor the years condemn;  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.

LAWRENCE BINYON, "For the Fallen".  
*(by permission.)*

Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas;  
Ease after war, death after life doth greatly please.

SPENSER.

## XIX

### 1919. THE FUNERAL OF EDITH CAVELL.

When in Brussels in Feb. 1919, I had made a pilgrimage to the Tir National to see Edith Cavell's grave. The place is in the suburbs, and a long building containing regimental quarters, etc. fronts on the street. The gardien took me down a flight of stairs. . . . the same the heroine nurse had traversed a few minutes before her death. At the foot a door to left led to the targets and rifle ranges, grass-covered mounds and pits at varying distances. Less than 20 feet outside the door was a small, low, cement platform, and this was the spot where the English Sister met her unjust fate. Her executioners stood with backs to the building. Most of the neighbouring houses are some way from the wide thoroughfare outside the walls, and shots in the night had become dreadfully familiar in Brussels. The time was two or three A.M., but if those nearby heard not, the shots rang round the world. In 1925 I saw the place again, and the cement block bore an inscription. . . . names of those who also suffered German brutality. . . . surrounded by blooming flowers.

The Belgian directed me to the far corner of the grounds where 42 so done to death were buried, including a Belgian woman, and I went on alone over the paths and ridges. It was an intensely dismal place, wet and sloppy. In a hollow lay the murdered civilians, a mud hole. Some of these arrested on various charges had been missing from their homes for months, their fate unknown till the evacuation. The sunken, shapeless mounds now had faded flowers on them, and relatives and friends had placed crosses and photos. Almost in the centre was that of Miss Cavell. Planks had been laid cross-wise to enable visitors to step on to the quagmire between the graves. The King and Queen of the Belgians had been among the first to come, and had deposited a wreath, and these sent by our Royal Family by the British and Belgian Red Cross, London Hospital, and many others lay there also, hiding the ugliness. A Union Jack swathed the Cross. The cell in the prison where she spent the last weeks is kept as she left it, for the people of Brussels considered her one of their own, from her pre-war services in her hospital. A plaster model of a Memorial to her had been prepared in secret, was put up within a few days of the German withdrawal, and the French commemorated her, by a bas-relief on a wall near the Tuilleries Gardens, representing the scene of execution.

Queen Victoria and Edith Cavell are the only women in history who have had four funeral processions, with both naval and military honours. First there was that in Brussels, a public tribute of affection, and from the coast a destroyer conveyed the body to Dover by night. In the morning people gathered all along the railway to London to look upon the casket, seen through the coach windows, as the train went slowly by. Then from Victoria Station to the Abbey, an Imperial spectacle and national honour, and finally from Liverpool St. station to the last resting-place in “Life’s Green”, beneath the shadow of Norwich Cathedral.

A number of tickets were issued to Dominion nurses, and we had front chairs in the Nave, the long rows facing each other, with a wide aisle between, so that everyone might see the cortége. Long before the hour of noon, the great building was filled, many standing throughout the service. Presently Queen Alexandra entered through the west door and slowly passed up through the standing multitude, noticing the uniformed women with a kindly eye, to her seat in the Sanctuary. The peculiarly solemn hush which seems to belong to the Abbey on national occasions fell on the waiting congregation. Over the vast expanse of London, flags flew at half-mast, and thousands of black-robed silent mourners packed the route of the funeral. It was one of those right and fitting ceremonies which London manages supremely well, natural and dignified. Dominion and Colonial troops lined Victoria Street at their own request, contingents of Home troops marched behind the coffin, and all windows were filled with faces. In the choir contingents of nurses from the London Hospitals, and representatives of the Overseas’ services had reserved seats. The Grenadier Guards’ band filled the interval with solemn music.

Queen Victoria had asked for “the funeral of a Soldier’s daughter”, but Edith Cavell could never have dreamed of this pageant in the chief Sanctuary of the Race. Presently a note of a military dirge in the distance, caught and lost again. Then louder up the curve of Victoria Street, the rhythmic cadences of the Dead March drawing nearer, and the tread of slow, marching feet. Contrasting with the dusk inside the Abbey, the bright day glowed in the frame of the great west doorway, and we in the front row saw the gun-carriage turn into Broad Sanctuary, with its escort of khaki-clad troops. The impression of a shaft of sunlight concentrated on the Union Jack, made it so vividly scarlet that all around seemed grey. A few muffled orders, the tolling of the Abbey bells, and six tall guardsmen paused motionless a moment at the entrance, arms interlaced beneath the casket on their shoulders. The Dean, clergy and white-robed choir formed, faced the east, and headed the procession. On the flag lay a single wreath of red

roses. . . a martyr's crown. . . . from the Queen Mother. Another silent movement, and the bearers had raised the coffin above the heads of the people, pacing on an inch at a time, so that it seemed to glide through the ranks, till it disappeared under the arch into the choir, and its central place of state. The murmur of prayer, psalm, and Scripture Lesson came faintly from the distance, and every word of the only hymn, 'Abide with me', though sung by the multitudes, seemed to come from the silent form under the triune crosses, as Miss Cavell had repeated them a few hours before her death. After the service trumpeters in Henry VII's chapel sounded the 'Last Post' as for a comrade . . . unique recognition in this place of a woman who had "died for her country", three and a half years before.

Let me quote the moving tribute of a writer present from the U.S.A.: (Dr. Geo. B. Gordon.) "The home-coming of Edith Cavell was a ceremony which in its broad and general effect was so solemnly impressive, and which in the scenes attending it, was so perfect in detail that I experienced a sense of physical pain. It was a pageant in which one felt the awful presence of an unseen reality. It grew out of the depths of silence, mounted on a great wave of sound, and died away in the dim recesses of that old pile, with tremulous sobbings and pulsations. From the first distant sound of muffled drums penetrating the expectant stillness of the tense assembly as the procession approached through the silent ranks without, till the sounding of the Last Post that filled the high vaults with awesome thunderous sound, all consciousness was carried forward on a rising wave of emotion that shook the depths of being, and left the spirit appalled. I cannot think of it in any other place than Westminster Abbey."

Great Britain demobilized sooner than any other of the contending nations, just as she had disarmed long before Peace has become the policy of the world. London and the countryside was full even as early as June 1919, of discharged sailors going to their homes, the very beginning of unemployment for thousands, and the soldiers returned to civilian life found in many cases no place for them. London without uniforms, no ambulance trains in the stations, sandbag protection being carted away from the City, and lighted streets at night, was a London with which we had grown unfamiliar. The Army huts in the Parks were to remain for sometime longer, but the city had thrown off the nightmare of warfare, which, in spite of the battles they have fought for themselves and others, is an unnatural manner of life for all British peoples. Canadian Sisters awaiting transport home were accommodated in the Hostel under the auspices of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, overlooking Kensington Gardens, the town house of Lady Minto, also a second house in Ennismore gardens, kindly loaned to

the Canadian Red Cross and in the country at Bearwood Park, near Reading, a beautiful property laid out by the Walter family, the founders of The Times. My last billet was with No. 5 Canadian General Hospital then stationed in the work-house at Liverpool. The quarters for the Sisters were the most comfortable I had met with, and the Unit a pleasant company of people from British Columbia. The main building itself was somewhat of a barracks, and housed Canadian soldiers ready to be shipped to Canada. The work was very light, and could not be dignified with the name of “active service” any longer.

## BRITISH ARMIES' NURSING SERVICES.

August, 1914. Within three weeks of the declaration of war there were 516 'Imperial' nurses in France.

	Enrolled.	Casualties.	by enemy action.
Great Britain	23,673	302	45
Canada	2,854	49	21
Australia	2,045	14	
New Zealand	579	15	10
South Africa	382	9	
Newfoundland	43	1	
Canadian Nurses serving with Q.A.I.M.N.S. numbered			228
Australian and New Zealand " "			131
			1914 1918
Q.A.I.M.N.S. and Reserve totalled . . . .			463 13,124
Territorial Force: . . . . .			9,236

At Armistice 5650 British nurses on lines of communication.

Enrolled in St. John's Ambulance Brigade and British Red Cross: 82,857.

Total Casualties 389, commemorated on Screen in York Minster. Canadian Nurses' Memorial, Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

Canadian Volunteers: 22 Nurses served 6 months at La Panne, Belgium. 4 C.A.M.C. Sisters attached to staff of Anglo-Russian Hospital in Russia. 1915-17 Canadian V.A.D. nurses (St. John's Ambulance) 342. Cas. 1. R.R.C. 1.

## DECORATIONS

	R.R.C.	M.M.	
Great Britain			
Canada	317 (Bar) 4	8	(Bravery in bombed hospitals at Etaples and Doullens.)
Australia	147	7	
New Zealand	76		
South Africa	10		
Newfoundland	5		

A number of French and other foreign medals were also bestowed.

Besides Great Britain and Home stations in the respective Dominions and Colonies, Nurses served in Hospital ships and transports, and in

France	Island Lemnos,	Serbia
Belgium	Ægean Sea.	The Cape
Gibraltar	Mesopotamia	German S.W. Africa
Malta	Palestine	German E. Africa
Egypt	India	Black Sea Force
Salonika	Hongkong	Russia
	Italy	and on the Rhine.

Approximately 110,500 Nurses and V.A.D.'s served abroad and 30,000 in home countries, 1914-18. Some still on duty in post-war hospitals.

Note: It is with much regret that I have to omit decorations awarded Nursing-Sisters of the British Isles, neither the War Office, nor any other authority applied to having been able to furnish them.

## AN ENGLISH SISTER'S ACCOUNT OF SINKING OF HOSPITAL SHIP ANGLIA.

“About 500 patients had been taken on board at Boulogne, chiefly fractured femurs and headcases who had been some months under care in France. They were anxiously watching through the portholes for the first sight of the white cliffs of England, which alas, many were destined never to see.

“About noon, when some six miles off Dover, there was a tremendous crash and iron girders, etc., came falling down like matchwood. It was realized immediately that the ship had either been torpedoed or struck a mine. . . . All the sisters and orderlies fixed lifebelts upon themselves and such of the patients who were helpless. We at once began removing splints, for the obvious reason that if a man with his legs in splints got into the sea, his body would go under and the splints rise to the surface.

“As many as possible were carried on deck, and those who could threw themselves into the sea. . . . Unfortunately, as the ship sank so rapidly, it was only possible to lower one boat. The patients kept their heads wonderfully; there was no panic whatever, and when one realises that in the majority of cases, they were suffering from severe wounds, amputations, and fractured limbs, it speaks volumes for their grit, for they must have endured agonies. After we had satisfied ourselves that there was no chance of getting any more wounded off, the bow having quite gone under, the stern above water, with the propellers going at a terrific rate, the Sisters got on to the rudder, and jumped into the sea, where hundreds were still struggling . . . . It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight to see the armless and legless men trying to support themselves in the water. . . . When the destroyers reached us, the survivors were quickly taken into the boats, but in some cases so many grasped the sides, that they were capsized. . . . I personally was in the water about 40 minutes, and that would be about the average time for the majority. The date was Nov. 17th. 1915. . . . not the kind of seabathing one would indulge in from choice. . . . The kindness of the men on the destroyer we shall never forget.”

(A. Meldrum.)

## EXTRACTS FROM OFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF SINKING LLANDOVERY CASTLE.

“Deliberate in its conception, every circumstance connected with the incident reveals the German in the light of the cunning murderer, who employs every foul means to destroying all trace of his despicable crime. . . . systematic attempts of the submarine to ram, shell and sink the lifeboats, and wreckage, on which floated helplessly the 248 unfortunate victims, 116 miles from land, off the coast of Ireland. . . . only one boat with 24 survivors escaped. Six were saved out of 97 C.A.M.C. personnel . . . . A stirring record of the perfect discipline of all ranks, and the loading of the lifeboats in the face of every possible obstacle . . . . Official verification of the facts confirms the supreme devotion and valiant sacrifice of the medical personnel and the ship’s company, whose courage and resignation were in keeping with the proudest traditions of the Army and Merchant Marine Services. . . . This crime surpassed in savagery the already formidable array of murders of non-combatants by the Germans. . . .

“The ship went down within ten minutes of being struck, and for upwards of two hours the submarine repeatedly attempted to blot out all traces of the deed by rushing to and fro among the wreckage, and firing twenty shells or more from the large gun they carried. Three efforts were made to run down the boat that escaped, after shelling it. The hour was 9.30 P.M. Without any warning a terrific explosion wrecked the after part of the ship, killed the engine room crew and all lights went out. The scene was appalling. On all sides survivors were crying for help. . . . The submarine commander ordered one boat to leave the drowning, and put a C.A.M.C. officer on board his vessel. . . . (The enemy later fired into and sank several boats.) One man who climbed on to the submarine was thrown off the deck. . . . The ‘U’ boat remained on the spot for two hours, and made no response whatever to the cries for help coming from all directions.

“Unflinchingly and calmly, as steady and collected as if on parade, without a complaint or outward sign of emotion, our fourteen devoted Nursing-sisters faced the ordeal of certain death . . . . a matter of minutes. . . . as our lifeboat neared the mad whirlpool of waters where all human power was helpless. Our boat had been quickly loaded and lowered, but there was great difficulty in cutting the ropes, and the oars were all broken in preventing it from pounding against the ship’s side. Finally we commenced to drift away in the choppy sea, and were carried towards the stern, when suddenly the poop-deck seemed to break away, and the suction,

tipping the boat over sideways, drew every occupant under. We had been in the boat about 8 minutes. It was the last I saw of the Sisters, and though they all wore lifebelts, it is doubtful if any came to the surface again.” (Story of the Sergeant in charge of the boat, who sank three times, but was Rescued.)

“Through all this record, nothing stands out more brilliantly than the coolness and courage of the Sisters, whose sacrifice under the conditions described will serve to inspire men and women throughout the Empire with a yet fuller sense of appreciation of the deep debt of gratitude this nation owes to the Nursing service.”

Note: The above accounts by Courtesy of War Records’ Office, Ottawa. I am also indebted for certain of the Nursing Statistics to the same source. Acknowledgments are due the Governments of other Dominions for figures quoted.

## LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY.

Dear land of hope, thy hope is crowned,  
God make thee mightier yet;  
On sov'ran brows, beloved, renowned,  
Once more thy crown is set.  
Thine equal laws, by freedom gained  
Have served thee well and long;  
By Freedom gained, by Truth maintained  
Thine Empire shall be strong.

Land of Hope and Glory,  
Mother of the free,  
How shall we extol thee  
Who are born of thee?  
Wider yet and wider  
May thy bounds be set,  
God who made thee mighty,  
Make thee mightier yet!

ARTHUR BENSON and SIR EDWARD ELGAR.

## XX

### FAREWELL MARCH OF THE EMPIRE TROOPS.

Some lack of imagination on the part of the War Office had set May for a review by the King of Dominion representative Contingents and the "Anzacs" of Gallipoli fame, some of whom had borne the burden and heat of the day, and had been fortunate in surviving three years in the field, were booked to sail for home at the end of April. There was much heart-burning and free speech, for which Australians were noted, and they announced they would stage the march anyway. The New Zealanders said nothing publicly, but were deeply disappointed at missing the farewell ceremony. But His Majesty, with his unfailing tact and interest, sent a message that the Prince of Wales would take the salute at Australia House. All was well, and Anzac Day, April 25th, saw 5000 men in line. They were accorded the privilege of marching through the "City" with bayonets fixed, which belongs of right to the Buffs, (East Kents) only, though the Jewish battalion raised in London for the Palestine campaign had been granted leave also. The Lord Mayor in robes of office stood on the steps of the Mansion House to bid them farewell in the name of the Empire's capital, and in the Strand the Prince, accompanied by F. M. Earl Haig, and General Birdwood took the salute. The Contingent made a splendid showing, while Anzac planes did amazing 'stunts' roaring and diving overhead. All along the route the marchers had a fine reception, and when they reached the Strand, the cheers were almost drowned by the "Coo-ees" of Australian soldier spectators. . . . After the last man had passed the Prince retired inside the Australia House, but the immense crowd which now blocked the Strand refused to leave without seeing him again. After half an hour he came out, and was immediately surrounded by an enthusiastic band, police not being able to get his car through for ten minutes. Then they sprang on to the running board, held hands through windows for good-bye shakes, and ran after the car with whoops from the back-blocks, crying "Good old Eddie."

May 3rd. 1919 saw the last corporate act of the war for the Dominions, the march past their Sovereign of the Overseas' forces. At Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and King Edward's Coronation ceremonies, Imperial contingents were present to witness to Empire loyalty and pay a tribute of affection to the Crown. But now, in sober service kit, without pomp or decorated streets, veterans from the Britains beyond the Seas, who had by sacrifice won an equal place in defence of the Empire and the liberty of the world, passed

proudly by Buckingham Palace, confident in duty accomplished, and more firmly linked than ever before.

His Majesty, with every member of the Royal family, stood on a raised pavilion outside the central gate of the Palace. Below Earl Haig, with other military leaders, and members of the Government, watched the final scene of the drama. Old Sir Dighton Probyn, with long white beard, and bent almost double with age, was there to see another generation of the army march past. (V.C. Crimean War) Fourteen thousand children lined Constitution Hill, waving little flags gaily. Twenty Canadian planes circled above, and the weather was perfect. The route was from Grosvenor Gate, Hyde Park, where the parade formed up, past the Palace, thence by Whitehall, Charing Cross, the Strand, Kingsway, High Holborn, Oxford Street, Marble Arch, and millions poured forth to see the official send-off to these men who had proved the unity of the Race. They roared continuous cheers, and demonstrated the warmest enthusiasm as the troops approached and moved away from the saluting stand. About 12,000 took part, of whom 5000 were Canadians. All Canadians thrilled with pride at their military bearing. "Tipperary" was their 'regimental' march, and the force was made up of Cavalry Brigade, 2nd. and 4th. Divisions of Infantry, with Engineers, machine gun section, artillery, Field ambulance and Air Force. They were in command of Lt. General Sir Arthur Currie, with whom rode Prince Arthur of Connaught. The King called Sir Arthur to the reviewing stand where he remained for some time. Eight abreast, they came on steadily, eyes saluting the Sovereign, colours flying, bands playing, clanking of harness, jingling of accoutrements, mingling with clatter of hoofs and roll of wheels.

Anyone surely could sense the difference from pre-war ceremonies, however magnificent. These men had suffered, had seen war as it had never been waged before, and had helped to wrest victory from the greatest military machine ever created. The men looked as if they felt the significance of the occasion, and must have appreciated the applause of the Empire's capital. A similar number of Australians followed, swinging to the music of "There's a long, long trail", their distinctive hats conspicuous as usual. New Zealand had for marching song "Land of Hope and Glory," very appropriately, for that other England is more closely interwoven with the Homeland than any portion of the Empire. South Africa and Newfoundland had proportionate contingents, and each Unit presented its very best appearance. The London Regulars, Territorials still in uniform, and soldiers once more civilians looked on admiringly, and applauded vigorously.

It was hours after the troops had returned to their encampments before the streets were normal again, and the citizens realized another pageant of the war was over. Two of us had been invited to seats directly opposite the King, at the foot of the Victoria Memorial, and to our infinite pleasure, we were among hundreds of wounded brought from the hospitals, and comfortably ensconced to view the parade. One account quoted the remark of an American officer, as he watched the march near the Palace, as epitomising the spirit of the display: "Well", said the Yank, "this is sure some Empire!"

Said an editorial: "These men responded to the call of the Motherland in her hour of supreme need. They fought with dauntless valour when days were evil and dark, and clouds hung ominously low over the battlefields, and with stern patience, high endurance, and unsurpassed courage cleaved their way to final triumph. London acclaimed her heroes of Empire to-day."

Another paper: "A Salute to the Dominion Armies."

"The Dominion forces are dispersing to their homes. It is the most vivid presentment of a great historic event, and the rally of the Empire will be stamped on the memories of those who saw 12,000 of its gallant sons march past to-day. What was formerly a strong faith has been converted into a truth of overwhelming demonstration, from the very first moment that the Union Jack was unfurled on the side of liberty and justice. Words can never describe the effect of the Dominions' instantaneous response in that critical hour. . . . an outpouring of service which no communities heretofore have witnessed. For what they did all thanks are poor. The true commemoration of their deeds can be found only in the moral greatness infused into their own sense of Race, and in the future of the Empire whose unity they have confirmed and sanctified." We had attended an immense memorial service in the Abbey the week before for the Household Cavalry Brigade, at which the King and Royal Family were present. They had 8000 casualties in all. And a few days before we left England, the London Scottish marched through the city, 'all that was left of them' two officers and twenty-five men of the original 1914 battalion.

The Megantic, full of returning soldier invalids, was entering the Gulf in June, 1919. Never had the River looked so beautiful, and the Dominion being of such vast size, half of these men had never seen the St. Lawrence before. Suddenly at teatime, there was a jar, the ship trembled and began to list appreciably. Every steward put down his tray and was gone with war

promptitude. The men on crutches stumbled up from below with anxious faces. Looking over the side we could see just below the surface, the smooth, green reflection of ice. We had run up on a flat submerged berg, and it was twenty minutes before examination below being made, and no damage found, we backed off gently, and proceeded on our way. It would have been unfortunate indeed had an accident marred the home-coming of so many, and a serious plight might have occurred in a lonely spot.

On June 4th., a day of almost tropical heat, the boat rounded the Island of Orleans. The men thronged the decks, eager to set foot on land. Trains were waiting to carry them to their homes. Canon F. G. Scott, beloved Padre of the First Division, was on the wharf in uniform to greet more of his “boys”, and once again, cheers, handshakes, and farewells intermingled. We were ‘demobilized’ four years and eight months from the date of sailing from the same landing-stage.

We Sisters were glad to have done what we could in the cause of Empire, justice and humanity, and we too were shortly scattered across a continent. Our memories will ever dwell with pride and gratitude upon the courage which kept the British Isles, Canada and the Empire from enemy domination. Our admiration and esteem should not stop at the glorious dead, but should never forget the maimed and unfortunate who have lived to wish they had not returned. The world has not been worthy of them. Few perhaps were saints, but we have all met some smug, self-satisfied persons, who were quite incapable of rising to the heights of sacrifice, unselfishness, endurance, generosity, and patience the men who served attained. “Soldiers and gentlemen”, Lord Roberts had called the Army twenty years before. “The men were splendid”, wrote Lord French. We saw them at their best, and it was very good, and so they will remain to us.

Let us teach children, instead of a “Peace at any price” mentality, to honour the guardians of order and liberty, and not to imperil our defence against worse evils than war, for there are such. With the example of the Great War before them, may they, if needed, be in their generation worthy of their fathers, and of the glorious company who laid down their lives for honour, freedom and the British Name.

\* \* \* \* \*

“There’s a far bell ring ing . . . .  
And a phantom voice is sing ing . . . .  
Of renown forever cling ing  
To the great days done.” . . . .

Newbolt.

“For GOD, for KING and COUNTRY . . . . the sacred  
cause of JUSTICE and the FREEDOM of the world.”

*Tomb of the Unknown Warrior  
Westminster Abbey.*

“I have fought His battles.”

*Altar, Peace Chamber, Ottawa.*

## ENVOI.

### THE SURE SHIELD.

*“And the people hasted and passed over.”*

—*Josh.* 4-10.

And when your children ask in time to come  
‘What mean these stones?’ answer ye them and say:  
‘Who made the sea His path walked here with some  
That held it, so His servants passed that way.’

ADMIRAL R. A. HOPWOOD.

*(by permission.)*

### EPILOGUE.

All our past acclaims our future,  
Shakespeare’s tongue and Nelson’s hand,  
Milton’s faith and Wordsworth’s trust  
In this our chosen and chainless land  
Bear us witness: Come the world against her  
England yet shall stand!

SWINBURNE.

## POSTSCRIPT.

One is absolutely confounded occasionally to meet individuals who have read *only German* books about the war!! How is it possible to understand anything of the British spirit of those days by studying a viewpoint diametrically opposite, or dealing altogether with futility and disgust?

Without on the one hand exalting any “glory” or “glamour”, or on the other being misled by the catchword “a war to end war”, let a sane attitude prevail. The British people have a sense of destiny, and have set an example, but they cannot control “nations that delight in war”, nor can the Geneva League. Our only choice in the last resort is to be prepared to defend ourselves, or accept slavery and extinction. Peace has its evils no less to be condemned than war, and our ‘Imperial’ type of hero is symbolized by a Nelson, *not* a Napoleon.

The writings of our own patriotic dead should be brought back from oblivion. The generation which went to battle from among our Race was the generation of sacrifice, (not ended yet for many survivors) who voluntarily laid themselves on the altar of the highest ideal which has ever been upheld in war.

“And died (unworthy most) in foreign lands  
For some idea dimly understood  
Of an English city never built with hands . . . .”

They could not attain all they aimed at, nor can we in this present day, but they did not “lose their souls!”

In spite of the conclusions of some of the world’s greatest thinkers, the main actors in the vast drama seem only faintly to have grasped the meaning of the part they played. What happened? This, that the result in 1918 was Superhuman. All the Empires of continental Europe fell; the face of the world was changed; the champions of the highest moral values were vindicated; a heritage of freedom wider than ever before was heralded to mankind; objectives infinitely more important than the immediate ends were won. But. . . the Deliverance was too soon forgotten, the post-war spirit has not maintained the clearness of vision and unity of purpose which, under Providence, brought Victory, and the too hasty, unrealistic conception of a man-made scheme to prevent war. . . internationalism. . . has, in the opinion of many of its blind supporters of 1920, “come to nought”.

Disillusion was bound to follow Illusion, especially among the British peoples who ever since have continued to bear the burden and make the chief sacrifice. It is amazing that it does not seem to occur even to the Allies and neutral nations as a whole what supreme factors were involved. Are any but Germans willing to work for and live in a German world? Among the enormous issues at stake then and now (to mention only five) what would have been the position of such questions as religious tolerance, the liberty of nations, the just rule of native Races, the freedom of the seas, the equality of men under the Law? Is it to be our Creed that *nothing* is worth dying for?

The basic causes of great wars lie deep beyond the insight of those who fix on armament makers or greed of territory or markets as the sole origin. Irreconcilable ‘spiritual’ principles, especially as between different racial civilizations in modern history, are far stronger influences. To-day they are again manifesting themselves in even greater extremes, and dividing the world into two vast camps. Would that the British People, in actual as well as in passive leadership, might put themselves at the head of the Confederacy of the Peaceful, free of underground cross-currents and sinister schemes, before forced to do so amid the panic and confusion of the final world conflict.

We might then look much sooner for the New Age when men “shall learn war no more. . . . none shall make them afraid”, but with one accord all shall say from the heart, as on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, fifteen years ago: “How beautiful—upon the mountains. . . . the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth PEACE!”

March 1933. The interest and cooperation of the Alumnae Association of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, and of subscribers here and elsewhere in Canada, have made this edition possible, and to them I desire to express my sincere appreciation.

The narrative, inadequate as I feel it to be, is as yet the only effort made in book form to fill a gap in the published record in Canada of various phases of the Great War. . . . the essential and honourable part played by the nursing services throughout the greatest convulsion in history. Canadians should know something of this chapter of the story also, and remember it. An attempt has been made to convey a general picture of scenes of the war as nurses saw it, living and working behind the lines, the only phase which has remained unnoticed during the years since, and to recapture something of the atmosphere of those days, which will I believe appeal to all who were “over there”, even though it comprises only *some* experiences of some

nurses. Others had thrilling personal adventures, but an eyewitness account must be necessarily incomplete.

“We who have seen men broken” are also proud to pay a tribute to the British forces, of land and sea and air, from the seven seas, and four quarters of the globe, who were our defenders, and some of whom we were privileged to aid. M.C.

March 1933.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Page numbers have been removed due to a non-page layout.

When nested quoting was encountered, nested double quotes were changed to single quotes.

Space between paragraphs varied greatly. The thought-breaks which have been inserted attempt to agree with the larger paragraph spacing, but it is quite possible that this was simply the methodology used by the typesetter, and that there should be no thought-breaks.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Our Bit: Memories of War Service by a Canadian Nursing-Sister* by Mabel B. Clint]