

Edith Elizabeth Appleton Diaries - Volume 2 (25 July 1915 to 25 April 1916)

October 1915

1 Oct. Came off night duty today - & am thankful - Spent 1st half day in the town at No. 8 - sewed, lunched - dossed - came back - had an hour's gramophone & then to bed where I am. My last night was a busy one - we did not evacuate until 11 p.m. then two men were very very ill - one died at 4:30 a.m. one did not.

[From loose sheets of notes for: **Oct 1st**. Appleton off night duty Middleton on. we evacuated at 11 p.m. - all but a few men.]

[October] 3rd. Many happies to Syd - I was in bed 1/2 of yesterday with some deadly illness - chill I think - feel all right today - & am going to get up after breakfast. Luckily we were slack enough for me to go off. Hope you are better too. I don't think the guns were very busy yesterday.

[October] 4th. Letter from Mother - she is better - Have not taken in many today - heavy firing all day - still going this evening - It is getting a bit active servicing cold stone floors - & no heating apparatus - no more news tonight.

[From loose sheets of notes for: **4**. Heavy firing all day - weather getting cold -]

[October] 5. Very noisy of guns all day - & shells bursting about 5 miles off. We hear they are shelling the road - to get our troops going up. We took in quite a fair number of blessé yesterday & evacuated all but 4 today. 3 too ill to travel & 1 poor wretch with a self-inflicted wound - who has been taken to a hospital for those unhappy men - to await their trial. Such a highly strung nervous youth - one can only feel very sad indeed for him - & wonder how one would have borne oneself in his circumstances.

I have been in to No. 8 tonight - Poor Miss C. is really ill & I don't wonder at it - She has some horrible form of neuralgia that comes on in agonizing attacks about every hour - or 1/2 hour - after what she has been through the last 8 months I don't wonder at any sort of break down. No letters today. We had a grand display of searchlights last night - looking for a Zepp. I don't know if they saw him in the end. Very dark night - Capt. Stirling kindly called for me & escorted me back. No special news. Except I hear the town is full of troops again

[From loose sheets of notes for: **5th**. We hear they are shelling the Ypres Rd to catch the troops going up - We took in quite a lot of wounded yesterday & evacuated all but 4 today - 3 too ill - & one awaiting trial for a supposed self inflicted wound.

Grand display of searchlights looking for a Zep.]

[From loose sheets of notes for: **5th**. Town still full of troops.]

[October] 6th. Letter from Hilda. Quiet day - off from 12 to 5 p.m. Lunched at No. 8 & made lace & had tea there. Poor old Miss C. is thoroughly ill with neuralgia. A taube was brought down - quite near here a few days ago - wish I had seen it - A silly fool of an orderly watched the whole thing & never told a soul. We have rather a trying Canadian patient who wants to know his temperature & the drugs used in his medicine all the time. If he were not so ill & badly wounded I would feel irritated by him - It is very cold weather now.

[October] 7th. We are taking in - about 100 - chiefly Canadians - 2 poor wounded spines - one is dead - the other dying. Cold - damp - little sunshine.

Received my welcome parcel from Hilda of pyjamas etc.

[From loose sheets of notes for: **7**. We are taking in - chiefly Canadians. 2 bad spine cases. Weather cold - damp. little sun.]

[October] 8. 4 cases in theatre otherwise calmish day. Busy morning - dressing & getting the train load off. Off this evening - went to see Miss C. She is looking frightfully ill. There is a huge fire raging over towards Dickybush [*Dikkebus* - see: <http://www.1914-1918.net/sacredground/upres/dikkebus.htm>] - making a wide red glow in the sky - some of their inflammable bombs I suppose.

We had some rather badly wounded people in last night & yesterday. I was dressing a man shot all over the place - including his l. eye. I told him I was afraid the eye was done for. He simply said "Oh, well - then I shan't have to shut it for shooting next time I come out." Letter from Lil. There is a charming variety of little carts in this town, from the size of an ordinary goat chaise - up to a big donkey cart - Drawn by - one - two three - four or five dogs of any kind - sometimes an old man - or woman perched in it driving - if only I could draw I would. It is a very dark walk out from the town nowadays at night - & the[y] have their door steps half across the pavement. The gramophone is going in the officers' ward so I want to hurry in there into bed to listen to it - Goodnight.

[From loose sheets of notes for: **8th**. 4 cases in theatre otherwise calm day - busy morning getting convoy off. There is a huge fire blazing over towards Dickibush making a wide red glow in the sky. Some rather badly wounded in last night & yesterday -]

[October] 10th. Our taking in day - but we haven't taken much - I am staying late on duty to help with the first night convoy - & wish it would hurry up & come, I want to go to bed. One poor man who came in this morning shot right through the head is trying hard to die, but is taking a long time. We shouldn't allow an animal to remain alive in the condition this poor fellow is in - He can scarcely breathe for the brain matter that is oozing down his throat & his whole head is in a hopeless state & he is making a terrible noise all the time.

Went to early service in our own little cellar church - then we had evening service in one ward - & all the walking cases from upstairs came to it. Hurrah - here is the convoy - so now for it & then to bed.

[From loose sheets of notes for: **10th**. Our taking in day - Evening Service in Ward I.]

[From loose sheets of notes for: **11 & 12**. Very quiet]

[October] 13. Yesterday & the day before were quiet - only about 7 patients left in my ward. Off duty on Monday evening. Went to dinner at No 8. Tea there yesterday. Miss C. is still waiting for her relief to come. Met Colonel Christie there at tea. He was telling us about when they had their Head Qrs. up at Ypres in a dugout. The Germans knew they were somewhere there & were always trying to locate it to shell it. The shells fell closer & closer & at last were so near that they shook the dug out so violently that all the ascetelene [*acetylene*] lamps went out - they dare not use paraffin in case of a shell coming right in. He said the language was appalling. The different officers would be reading or writing - & every few minutes were left in total darkness. There was an old dug out that had been made by the French in the early part of the war & had become very thin on top - in fact was not at all bomb proof. They wondered which would be better, to remain old looking & unsafe & take their chance of not being hit - or to have more loads of earth put over them, which would have made them safer - but more noticeable. They chose to take their chance - with the old grass grown roof - & were only hit by small shells twice - & they stood that all right. [*Small drawing at this point in the diary. Hard to decipher but it may say "Also Mayor" meaning the name of another nurse who left with Latham - see below*]

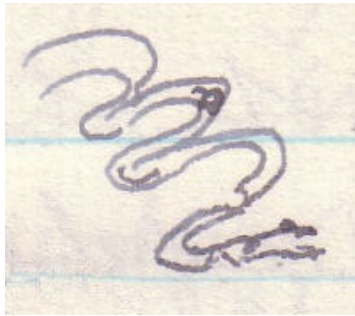
[From loose sheets of notes for: **13th**. Our taking in - not busy early - but later on more came in - case in theatre abdominal from 11 p.m. to 2.30. Quite a good convoy in between 11 & 4 - not many after - chiefly from Kimmel]

[October] 14th. Miss C. went this morning. Latham called hurrying to say Goodbye - she has orders for No 8. Station Wimmereux so all my old friends are going & I expect I shall be sent toute suite.

I did not go to bed last night till 4.15 this morning. Had a bad abdominal op. in the theatre until 2.30 - Helped with the convoy until 4.15. We had a fair sized one in between 11 & 4 - from Kimmel - our men attacked the G. trenches to discover the strength of theirs. Found only a few, but quite enough to wound hundreds of our men with their maxims & rifles. We evacuated 2 or 3 hundred by 10 a.m.

[October] 15th. Many Happy returns to Bud. Quiet day - no rumours. The big gun has gone. Off 2-6, gathered autumn leaves on Mt. Noir with Miss Hutchinson. We take in tomorrow.

[October] 16. [Written on] 18-10-15. We had a rather busier "taking in" day - some bad abdominals - operated on & doing badly - the operation gives them their only chance - & that a slender one - when the intestine is like a badly damaged inner tube of a bicycle - with tears & holes all along it. Maj. Ray took 15 inches from one man - & 4 at one operation & another 4 at a second operation from a youth who died last night (17th).



"...when the intestine is like a badly damaged inner tube of a bicycle - with tears & holes all along it. "

On the 17th - yesterday - was off 6 - 8. Quiet day - 1 abdominal operation - 2 1/2 hrs. Went to town in the evening with Lawton & Constable, who came to see us from No 8. Miss C. & I went to the Canadian service - or at least the tail end of it - at the theatre - we were just in time for the last 2 mins of sermon & hymn "Abide with me". It sounded fine on their brass band - & they played for about an hour after service - all sorts of things, chiefly patriotic music. About 5 wks ago some of the Can. Battalion thought they would like some music - & set to work at once to form a "Band". They collected £60 amongst themselves & sent to England for instruments - & with a few odd practices - have got a good well played band in going order in 5 weeks. The Theatre is a huge Hall with a stage & hung round with flags - it was rather a warlike looking place last night - packed with officers & men - in all stages of cleanness & dirtyness - some in who were in the middle of a march. All along, the sides were lined with rifles, axes - panikins - equipment of all sorts brought by those who were, really on march. They loved the music & for the most part looked cheerful - There were only 6 women - 2 of us - 3 Sisters from No. 2 & 1 from No. 8. but we have to get used to being very much in the minority. The music was most refreshing. I only wished the poor fellows who lay a-dying in our Hospital could have heard it too.

On the way home we met a Battalion coming in from the trenches for a rest - a raggedy sandy looking crew - very happy - singing & cheering as they steadily marched along to the music of a drum & fife band - streams & streams & streams - infantry chiefly - some officers & other things on horses. They looked rather picturesque in the moonlight filing up the quaint narrow pavé street - clanking their boots on these hated stones. They were cheering for anything & nothing - cheered when they passed us - the little band away at the head of the line could hardly be heard for the noise the men made - & the length of the line - That big gun that was sitting at our gate for some time is in position - not too far off & has started coughing - & this place rattles & shakes worse than ever - it is really difficult to sleep through although it is wonderful how one gets used to it.

[From loose sheets of notes for: **16th**. We had rather a busier taking in day - some bad abdominals - operated on - one doing badly - one query - I went to Canadian Service at the theatre.]

[October] 18th. Quiet day - went with Hutchinson Lawton & Constable to Mont Noir - to get autumn leaves. Glorious it all looked with its hundreds of soft shades & tints & the sun setting & a blue haze over all. Really beautiful. I had a large lunch of steak & carrots at 1:30 - then we found the two from No. 8 had to be on duty again at 5 so we had tea at 3:30 - boiled eggs - anchovy & sardine sandwiches plum bread & butter & tea - I don't want my dinner tonight - at least I wish I didn't - it would be more refined. P.S. We got leaves - lovely red oak ones etc.

[October] 19th. Busy day - 3 cases in the theatre, the last a very young Officer - about 18 - with his poor head - cracked - like a nut

[From loose sheets of notes for: **19th**. Fairly busy. 3 cases in theatre. 1 officer [nephew] head - died 12 hrs later.]

[October] 20th. He died this morning. As I was crossing the aerodrome coming back from dinner a sentry somewhere called "Halt" in such a sharp tone – I did halt & stood still looking for him – but the moonlight was not good enough to show him up – so I coughed in a treble voice & went slowly on – I don't think he was challenging me – but I had no fancy to be shot. I received a letter from Mrs. Chamber – telling me of Robert's death from wounds & severe concussion – dear boy – I am terribly sad about it. We have 3 men in suffering from shock – No. 1 – is stone deaf – No. 2 is not deaf – but dumb - & has a nervous tremor – No. 3 sits with the expression of a thoughtful monkey - & keeps saying "I remember playing football – but after that -----". I think probably what did happen after that was that the shell broke up his football pitch - & buried him. We have 8 cases left over from the convoy 5 very bad – one – having had – right arm & foot & left hand fore finger amputated for gas gangrene & who is now mad from septic poisoning. An abdominal – who is dying slowly – another whom I think will die - & two head cases mad as hatters at present.

[October] 21st. We had the two head cases in the theatre trephined. I am afraid they haven't much chance – poor things! There were two very loud & very near explosions this afternoon – we thought they were shells – but some one said they were our own people experimenting. The C.O. & Mr Flether left – for permanent moves – today. Major Ray is in Command for the present. Miss Hutchinson & I went to a concert given by the Canadians in aid of British prisoners in Germany. The Concert was excellent & they are sending £60 – proceeds – The "Minstrel troop" – were very cleverly dressed in hospital "blues" – jacket blue side out – trousers white side out - & a flaming red bow at their necks. There were many Staff Officers – the Earl of Cassilis, Sir John Stewart & Canon Scott spoke – shortly. It has been fine all day but is pouring now. There were 4 sisters from No. 8 – two from No. 2 – 2 from us – the rest of the theatre packed tight with Officers & men.

[From loose sheets of notes for: **21.** Two head cases in theatre
Two big explosions somewhere near this afternoon - our men testing bombs - some one says.
Canadian concert in aid of British prisoners Miss Hutchinson & I went. They took £60.
[Two addresses - presumably relations of patients - written perpendicular to the other notes:]
Mrs Ethel Wilson Field House - Home Church Lane Beverley Yorks -
Thomas Cooper abdominal Mrs. Cooper 29 Wilbert Lane Beverley Yorkshire -]

[October] 22nd. 1 case in theatre this evening – tidying up a leg which had been blown off. Letter from J. H. C. Not off – did not take in many. No news.

[October] 23rd. Quiet day – one op. trephine – fairly hopeful case. Off 2 to 6 – Went for lovely walk along Neuve Eglise Rd with Miss Hutch[inson].

[October] 24th. Wrote to Madge. Very young Officer admitted this evening very badly torn & wounded in a painful part of his anatomy at present heavily under morphia– Off this morning went for long walk alone – Bed early – arrowroot & no dinner. Major Ray & Capt. R.T. came to tea. Major Ray was in Pop[eringe] today – he says the place is deserted, but people still live in a few of the houses & the place is shelled regularly every day – I believe the man who was Mayor there in our day has been taken as a Spy. Concert at Flying Corps last night – Major Ray inspected the unit – today at 11:30 Parade. Col. Boyle is going to the Balkans in charge of a hospital. Our new C.O. has not come yet. The man in No. 2 ward who had 15 inches of gut taken away is dying – he is quite mad poor fellow & looks terrible.

[October] 25th. Many Happy returns of the Day to Madge – we should have been taking in today, but after getting only a few ambulance loads – we were stopped & told that No. 2 was taking in. This afternoon. I heard why. The King is coming on Wednesday – & will be taken to No. 2 as it is senior C. C. S. here & they want to have plenty of patients when he comes so they are to take in today & tomorrow. King will come on Wednesday & then they will evacuate

afterwards. It has been pouring with rain all day. Miss Hutchinson and I were off 2 to 5. Walked in to No. 8 to tea – no letters.

[October] 26th. Glorious day – sparkingly clear – view simply wonderful – No. 2 still taking in – to have enough for the King to see tomorrow. Went to town to buy vegetables for the mess & drove in in a motor lorrie & noticed every – single person – of hundreds facing the sky – soon could stand it no longer & got down just in time to see a Taube hit & fall – in our own lines. The observer was killed & the pilot wounded in the head – I did not see him but they said he looked a mere boy – of 17 or 18. Later on another German aeroplane was brought down but I didn't see that. The afternoon was cold – I was on duty in the ward from 2 – 6 & made lace there for about 1 ½ hours. After 6 I took my lace pillow to town & had a lesson. The little girl was full of news & told me that King George had been to Bailleul today & visited one Hospital. It was being kept a dead secret – how these people get to know everything is marvellous – the guns have been fairly active all day.

[October] 26th. [*Should be 27th as the next date is 28th?*] We took in not many – one head case too bad to operate on who died in about 1 hour. 6 Officers.

We saw the King today - quite close up, on his way to the town - to No 2. The who[le] procession of him was - outriders - consisting of a car with 2 Staff Officers & 3 motor bicycles - all flying red flags - then followed 4 cars - 2 officers in the first - the King & Gen. Plumer in the second - then more officers in the last two. Our poor abdominal died today. 4 of us Sisters - 4 M.O.s & about [*sic*] officers of the R.F.C. stood at our gates to salute the King as he passed - he looked very grave & saluted us. The road was uncommonly like a river with mud & we were splashed from head to foot but it was nice to see him so close. Day has been very rainy & bright intervals. No guns heard all day.

[October] 28th. Chiefly remarkable for having rained without stopping a single minute all last night today & tonight - a heavy wet rain.

Two cases in theatre - an abdominal - 3 inches cut out of his small intestine - fix shrapnel tears - & a smashed hand (Officer) - by the way - I am coming out of the theatre at the end of the month. Off 2-5. Paddled to town - took a lace lesson - & waded back with my lace pillow & the large German umbrella. Major Mackintyre came today, Major Ray left. Capt Hey came. He came from 9 Field Ambulance at Vlammeringhe [*Vlamertinghe*] -& says there are only about 3 buildings left there now. Last week - he was going up to Ypres to fetch wounded - with two ambulances when they were just outside the town a shell burst close to them, killed the driver on one side of him - wounded the Padre (going up to bury the dead) so badly that he died in a few hours- wounded all three men on the second car & he was the only one unhurt. It shook his nerves rather - he had been friendly with the Padre for the last 6 months. It is so cold tonight - I could not face my bath. One inch of water covers one such a little way up & the rest shivers, so here I am in bed all unwashed.

[October] 29th. Anniversary of the Passing of a Good Man - our dear Father.

Our two abdominals died in the night. One was Lord George Sanger's

[/http://www.berkshirefamilyhistorysociety.com/journal/Sep2000/Sep2000OWhatACircus.htm/](http://www.berkshirefamilyhistorysociety.com/journal/Sep2000/Sep2000OWhatACircus.htm) son - such a charming man & so grateful for all that was done for him. I am afraid the man wounded in the chest will die too, he is terribly ill. I took my lace pillow & sat beside him this afternoon - he liked it very much & hated me to move even to get things for him. At 3, I made him a feeder of tea with brandy in - he said it was very good & wanted me to have some of it - I refused - & he pressed & insisted & was making himself breathless over it - so I did drink some from the back of the feeder - which pleased him very much indeed. He is a very nice man - as most of them are.

The boy who had his leg blown off by one of our own guns is doing well. He told me all about it today - says he remembers everything. He was mending a wire in front of the gun when the telephone message came for it to be fired - he did not hear the order - "Fire" & the shell blew his leg off without exploding - then went on & burst in the German trenches. He told me "We aren't in action all day - only when the German Infantry give any trouble, then our own Infantry telephone back to us - to fire on them to quiet them. Each battery has four guns - &

each gun has its own division of German trench to attend to, so when they are giving trouble the Infantry telephone & say which part of the German trenches they want shelled - & then the gun to be used is ordered - "Eyes front" & fires so many rounds & if that doesn't quiet them - we go on firing."

Today the weather has been an improvement on y'day - but very damp & cloudy. I went to town & did shopping for the mess this morning. Heard a rumour today that the King was injured while he was here. The story goes that when he was reviewing troops, they cheered & startled his horse - & it threw him & rolled on him. Hope it is not true.

[October] 31st. We took in some bad cases yesterday - one a bomb accident died as he was being brought in - quite a wealthy man - joined as a Private - & the sad part is that it was one of our own bombs. 4 badly smashed heads - all except one - dying - an abdominal dying - & the chest man we had in 3 days ago is dying a slow & very painful death. I was writing a letter for the abdominal boy to his fiancée & he wanted to know if he could say he would soon be better - I told him what I thought - & he said "Well, never mind I must just trust to God - He will take care of me." These dying men are so tired & don't seem to mind dying if only it will rest them, they are splendid people. I was writing a letter for one boy tonight to his Mother & found - he lived at Bedford - & was at school with the Chambers - & played against Robert in House matches. R. went to Ceylon & this boy went to Canada. 2 cases in the theatre today - one head and the Bedford boy - leg.

I have a pouring, horrible cold & have had it for days. I think it is getting hot in the wards & then going over in the rain & mud to meals. Also the stone floors are not the warmest things to stand on in the Theatre. I think I will skip dinner & go early to my bed ce soir.

The big gun near us was trying to get the range of some cross roads at Messines [*known as Mesen in Belgium*] yesterday. I think it must have got it because - although it is cloudy & misty today - it has been firing. The King had an accident while he was at Bailleul - hope it is not bad. Now for my bed - there goes that old gun again - "Lizzie" - I wonder what damage is happening at the other end of the shots.