

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

### February 1916

**Feb 1<sup>st</sup>.** Convoy came. No very serious cases. About 5 on the S. I. list (seriously ill). Miss Garrett has got influenza now. T. 104 Everyone seems to be getting it. No letters. New shoes came from Sorosis. Went for a walk alone, was much alarmed by hearing heavy-ish – firing, came in expecting to hear that a German submarine was at work off our shore but to my joy – found it was gun practise at Havre. Hear Paris has been attacked again – They are asking for it! The G[erman]s I mean – Quiet night. I went for long walk to Bénouville with Sister Thomas, bed in fair to middling time. The Sisters of No. 3 C.C.S. are at No. 10 Stationary – for a rest. Waiting to be sent somewhere. No. 3 is now a Canadian Unit.

**[February] 4<sup>th</sup>.** Not a quiet night. The wind has blown a gale tiles & chimneys have been flying, doors banging. Craig – our new batman was put here to sleep – as he had a temp - & felt sick. He rose up in his sleep & walked (as his habit is when ill) & tripped back to the quarters. The Orderly & I chased after him in double quick time, and after much anxious & fruitless searching, found him fast asleep on his own bed – I didn't know where the men slept - & had to hunt every coal shed & stable \_ till I found their billet – a loft, over stores. He seems much better this morning his night run in the rain has done him good. No mail last night. Have taken great care of my self the last 2 days – feeling a bit influenzaish, each morning been for a brisk short walk, then had a good hot mustard bath over in the Qrs. Rushed like a lunatic from the Qrs. to Annexe where I sleep – to my bed – between blankets.

**[February] 5<sup>th</sup>.** All wards seem to be settling down. One young Officer must be suffering badly from nerves – he is so restless in his sleep - & calls out – “Let ‘em have it – turn on the gas – give it them – now – more – more – get your bayonets to them the swine.” Then he wakes up in a heavy sweat – fearfully disappointed to find no Bosches to gas & kill. Weather muggy – starlight.

**[February] 6<sup>th</sup>.** Quiet night – no excitement so far. 5:30 a.m. I don't think I told you that two days ago – we had a very sad death – A young lad 21 only who seemed not extremely bad - was taken to the theatre for examination - & died on the table. 5 pints of fluid found in his lungs. P.S. I have put my exasperating little V.A.D. in a ward where there are two staff nurses - she is very happy there & I have an older & more woman of the world one in the Plage - so that's an improvement.



**Me going to the bath!**

**[February] 6<sup>th</sup>.** Quiet night - glorious walk - toute seule - this morning along the Canteen Road

**[February] 7.** Quiet night. Lovely walk - alone. Fécamp Rd. found no primroses, but very pretty ivy, gorse - & periwinkle. Wrote letters.

**[February] 8.** Quiet night, no fresh news, one man in the Plage - told me that once - they very nearly took the Crown Prince prisoner, but Von Kluck sacrificed his men - had them terribly cut up - to save the situation for the Prince.

Heavy showers yesterday - & through the night. Quite fine & starlight in between times.

**[February] 9<sup>th</sup>.** Roughest night I have known, heavy hail storms & a full gale. I could not breathe, or walk against it, was just blown hard against the walls of the houses. However - I enjoyed it - when I did manage to fight along sideways. Quiet night - am due to come off tomorrow - no letters. We have all been writing strong protests against having our allowances cut off. Don't know if anything will come of it. Have just had a glorious deep bath - & a glass of Bengers food - (with brandy) & am going to get into bed. Hope you are sleeping well now-a-days.

10<sup>th</sup>. Quiet night - am not off night duty yet. Bought an old Normandy paste - a St. Esprit jewel (pendant) for 150 francs. Went for a walk with Thomas. Saw some beautiful little terrier pups at the Canteen. Mother will not be bothered to feed them so we bought the corporal a babies feeding bottle for them. Bed - bon nuit.

**[February] 11<sup>th</sup>.** Told to take over No 3 Casino tomorrow morning.

Poured all night - did not go out - went to night cottage to hear Thomas playing piano.

Mair, Gibbens & Johnstone have gone to Havre, Craig has to go this afternoon, so they will be a very tired family tonight.

**[February] 12<sup>th</sup>.** Came off night duty this morning. Am taking Ritchie-Thomson [*Ritchie-Thompson?*] ward. Casino 3 & 4. Convoy coming tomorrow, so probably we shall all be called early. No letters.

**[February] 13<sup>th</sup>.** Convoy of 400 - or 399 to be exact - arrived at 6 a.m. My one ward is quite full - & the other not as it was in quarantine after a case of Scarlet fever. So I was not so busy as most people. No church - no letters, no off duty - no inclination to write - Have felt very ill all day - always do changing from night to day duty. Hope for better things. Good night - Mother - sleep well. I wouldn't mind being there too.

**[February] 14<sup>th</sup>.** Intensely cold day - gale blowing - went for a trudge along the shore this afternoon & loved it. Convoy settling down, some wards very heavy - mine not at all so - at present. No letters, no news.

**[February] 15<sup>th</sup>.** There is a big gale blowing shutters, glass, tin keep crashing down from somewhere & hurrying towards the N.E. This house is rocking & shaking & gritty stuff falls constantly. I am wondering if it is the mortar & the bricks come next. Bang! another shutter, there won't be many left on the Blanquet! [*ex-Hotel in Etretat*] More glass - This is the biggest blow I have ever sat through - I got out of bed a long time ago. Only wish I dare open my shutters (which by the way - I had to put gum boots & a mackintosh on - to shut) to look at the sea - it sounds like high tide & a tremendous one. We have heavy zinc tins for refuse - outside our quarters. I think they have all made off. My room has French doors for windows. One large pane was blown out in a recent gale, & now with my shutters shut, the wind is blowing through with such force that the curtain is in a streak straight across the ceiling. If I wrote down every time something crashed you would be tired of it, because something is - about every few seconds. Now I must think about dressing. Expect you are getting it too - it is a big blow.

**[February] 16<sup>th</sup>.** The enemy score one today - they have made a big attack near Ypres - & taken 600 yds of trenches.

Tremendously rough day - the place is strewn with broken glass - slate & woodwork. The

natives say it is the same every year - & that is why the entire place is battened up & closed during the months of winter. Our English patients who left this morning are held up at Havre as it is too rough for the hospital ship to go.

**[February] 17<sup>th</sup>.** Am dead beat with the weather. A gale has been blowing for days - without ceasing one minute, & the tremendous noise of sea & wind all day & all night - is really very tiring. Our E[nglish] patients are still held up, waiting for the sea to calm down. Lena Ashwell's concert - on duty did not go - Convoy tomorrow I believe.

**[February] 18<sup>th</sup>.** No convoy - storm continues - we are all dead beat.

**[February] 19<sup>th</sup>.** News of convoy in early morning, all to get up early.

**[February] 20<sup>th</sup>.** Convoy arrived at 7.15 (not a bad time) - not a heavy one. Filled No 3 & part of 4. One poor young fellow only 24 yrs. died after 4 hours - deadly gas gangrene, & another had his leg off at once - to save the same thing happening. He is such a nice man - with wife & 6 children - do hope he will do well (Faulkner by name). One man tells me that the Station Master & our driver at Pop[eringhe] have been shot as spies - good luck! The more the better - no wonder - some of the shells - made decent shots for the station. The place is riddled with spy vermin. - No letters - Good bye.

**[February] 21.** Busy day - in a way - Mair off - also S. R. ward calm.

**[February] 22<sup>nd</sup>.** Hy Mother - this is a morning to be alive on! Everything covered in snow - & the impatient cold sea beating itself into white foam at my very feet. Cliffs & rocks - cold - & clear. (6:30 a.m.). Now I must get up - good morning.

**[February] 23<sup>rd</sup>.** My view from my window this 6:30 a.m. - is beautiful. Boats, rocks, boathouses, beach, all thick in snow. There has been little of interest in the ward for you lately. Raper & I went to the woods yesterday & picked primroses & catkins & were caught in two snowstorms. My poor old amputation man told me about his wounding y/day. He is a gunner & he & his mate had had a busy day dragging their guns over a ploughed field to a fresh pit & had finished firing & were waiting to be relieved when the enemy started shelling - It was too violent a bombardment for the reliefs to come up, so he & his mate stayed by their gun. After a bit a shell came right in to them blowing his mate to bits wounding his own knee but never touched the gun. The shock of seeing his mate in bits made him a little light headed & the only thing he could think of to do was to get someone to help him (his mate). He cut off all his equipment & dragged himself to some stretcher bearers in a trench 50 yds off - & implored them to go & save his mate. Of course when they knew he was dead they didn't go. They put our man on a stretcher & trotted him off to the nearest dressing station. If he had stayed in his gun pit, he would probably have bled to death.

**[February] 24<sup>th</sup>.** Evidently the spring water on the shore is hotter than the sea. I am watching the tide come up (7 a.m.) & as it covers the rocks, & stones where the springs are - huge clouds of steam rise -



It has been an intensely cold night. Sleep was out of the question for a long time - Everything is frozen solid this morning - inside & out & oh! I have to dress.

**[February] 25<sup>th</sup>.** Up at 3 a.m. to receive new Convoy. Very tired now.

**[February] 26<sup>th</sup>.** It was not a big Convoy yesterday only about 300 but as we were fairly full before – it gave us a very busy day, poor beggars! They were cold – 3 a.m. is a chilly time to arrive, & Étretat was well under snow, & becoming more so. Today is the same – everything is thick in white unmelted snow, only little edges of shelter round each boat show brown beach. Cliffs, huts, houses, boats, breakwaters all thickly covered & looking very beautiful & unsuggestive of war; but the nights are cold & I could not get warm enough to sleep for such a long time. The night is silent here – not even a clock strikes, so perhaps the time seemed longer than it really was – The Sentries change at 2 a.m. & I didn't hear them! All leave is stopped. Looks like work ahead – Alors – We can only do our best.

**[February] 27<sup>th</sup>.** I am frozen stiff so won't stop to write more now.

**[February] 28<sup>th</sup>.** Ditto – Snowing & pouring all day – Bad headache –

**[February] 29<sup>th</sup>.** The mail boat has not been allowed to cross lately as the Channel is thick with mines & submarines. 6 vessels have been sunk in the last few days & sad to say, lives lost. This morning (6:30 a.m.) it happens to be a little less icy, there is no sign of snow about. Everything including the sea is lead colour, & all looks calm - more snow perhaps. No. 3 ward is light – No. 4 very heavy really although the ward has only 18 patients, it is a back breaking one to work in, they are always so very heavy.