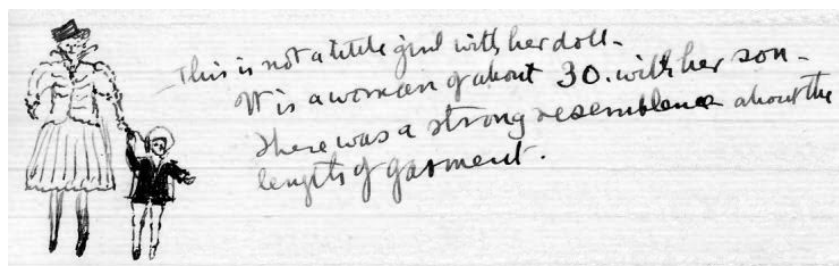


Edith Elizabeth Appleton Diaries - Volume 3 (8 May to 15 November 1916)

June 1916

The glorious 1st of JUNE. Lovely morning. Ascension day. I have called some of the others to get up for Early Service, but am not going myself. I never did go to the Early Service at home, on Ascension Day. Yesterday was a blessedly peaceful day. No one had a half day - The orderlies odded round - & looked up equipment for the monthly inspection & my two V.A.D.s & I had ample time to enjoy & perhaps spoil the patients. It must be a ghastly thing to be buried alive. One of my men was. He knew his company was shorthand - & the chances were - he would never be found - as only part of one hand was showing. His head was doubled over on to his chest & there was only ventilation enough for him to take short slow breaths. There was a tremendous weight on his shoulders sandbags and earth. He spent the time wishing he had been killed outright by a shell instead of being buried in a mine. When at last they got him out - he fainted & knew no more until he was in hospital. He is a quaint dreary creature - says he will never be the same again. Had another of the Chauffeuses in for treatment yesterday. She had crushed her hand in trying to take her tyre off. Quite a nice youngster. It seemed to open her eyes - to be in a Sisters Bunk for a bit. When I had cleaned her hand up - I left it to soak in lotion, while I did the diets - & saw about various things. The orderlies came up - & I did each one's diets with him - then the V.A.D.s came to know what to do - of the treatment & a thousand odd things - then I finished - the sore hand & sent her off. She came in the evening - again to have it looked at - & said - "I had no idea you had to do such a lot of things - you seem to have to see about everything." I told her that was the Sisters job. I think she had an idea that the Chauffeuses were the people who counted & we amused the patients, meanwhile. Today is the day of the year that the Sea is blessed.

[June] 2. Ascension Day Festivities were held in perfect weather & the place swarmed with happy trippers of all classes. They started pouring into the town at an early hour - on bicycles - & walking pushing perambulators full of babies & food for the day. Later on the carriage folk rolled up in dog carts - landaus - & motor cars. It was just like a Regatta day at home. All the flags were flying & people dressed in their Sunday best. The event of the day was the Annual service to ask a blessing on the sea - for the use of "the fishermen - & all - save our enemies." The first part of the service was held in the church. Then they came down to the sea - a long procession of first the newly confirmed children - in their robes & ties carrying banners, then the very young orphans, beautifully dressed, the girls in white with white wreathes, instead of hats - & the boys in smart little suits of all sorts from Lord Fauntleroy to sailors. After them the choirmen, black cassocks - lacey surplices - acolytes in scarlet & lace - & the Priests magnificently robed - in handsome lace - & yellow silk etc. Our R. C. Padre took the leading part & wore most wonderful robes - there was something that looked like Brussels lace - almost trailing the ground. When they got to the shore - the Priest (our R. C.) & his acolytes & the man bearing the crucifix - were pushed out to sea in a little boat & the blessing was asked from there. After that they processed back - & the rest of the day was en fête. In the afternoon our Scottish Canadian band from Havre played in front of the Casino - The bagpipe turns caused great excitement. It was not by any means all unselfishness that made me send both V.A.D.s off - & the Orderlies turn about for the afternoon & quietly kept house & patients myself. I loathe a crowd - & I saw a good deal from the windows - all the latest Paris fashions for instance.



[This is not a little girl with her doll - It is a woman of about 30 with her son.
There was a strong resemblance about the lengths of garment.]

V.A.D. Walker left last night. I had a letter from Fred asking for further particulars of 2 wounded officers for Mr. Warner – I can't help him much.
I made a candlestick & a chair yesterday. Army fashion.

[June] 3. Before I forget I want to tell you what I was too late to see of the Ceremony yesterday. The Priest made the sign of the Cross – (with the big crucifix that was carried at the head of the Procession – one about 4 ft) – in the sea, first at one side of the boat, then the other. Then he sprinkled the sea round him with water that had been blessed. For this, to our amazement he used an old wooden bowl covered with silver paper & an ordinary blacking brush – decked the same way.

Had the half day off yesterday - & walked with matron to a tiny Village – in the Grand Val – of the Seine – called Villianville [*Villainville*] – about 6 Kilometres away. We went along the Cricquetot [*Cricquetot*] Rd – which means through the Grand Val of the Seine – It was beautiful all the way, in colours - & in form. We really were walking along a tiny Rd – which formed the bottom of the Valley & both sides of us, hills rose high & irregular – covered variously – trees – woodland growth bracken & foxgloves, pasturage – that bright red clover - & multitudes of marguerites, lazy old cows tied by one leg – eating all they could of the clover. Very occasionally we passed a small farm – or big house in an exquisite garden, otherwise we saw no sign of human beings. Rhododendrons were at their best & were growing in clumps of mixed colours, heliotrope & bright red all in huge masses together looked so pretty. The village is tiny. We went over the old church – just a little old plain one – with seats for 172 people, lit by a few candles, & with not much in except statues of St. Antoine, St. Joseph & St. Marie – decked in trinell [?] flowers -. Besides that there were two big beautiful houses two small farms - & the place where we had tea – Café – public house – grocers shop – combined. The people ought to have lived about 100 yrs ago, dear simple things! After much description of how to get tea ready for us – the man & wife said they would do their best. We came back in 1/4 hour - & found one of the bar tables cleaned – a loaf of bread sat on it – no plate - & two eggs – an egg cup & plate each for us & that was all. We asked for butter & they seemed delighted we thought we could manage a little butter as well as all the rest. The tea stumped them quite. The man said – “pardon” but would we drink it hot or cold. We told him hot & he quickly brought a big jug of it – they used no milk, but it was most delicious & very hot. Their children, big fair baby things hung round the door - & wondered what strange creatures we could be. The man's brother was coming to see him next morning & he was half laughing & half crying with joy over it. Matron's little dog distinguished himself by nearly killing a chicken – he is a pup. We rescued it & scolded him – so that tragedy was averted.

The walk home I won't tell you about – you have heard of the evening beauties too often but I don't wonder that they called the place “Étretat” which means “Hamlet of the Setting sun.” Walking along the valley towards it, one sees it to great advantage.
Marcey & 3 V.A.Ds returned from leave.

[June] 4. Too terribly sad news of a naval battle in which we appear to have lost very heavily – 18 ships - & men (?) I only hope we shall get further details that will show it to be not quite so bad. One thing we have knocked out a German Battleship. Yesterday was calm & uneventful cold – windy. No mail.

[June] 5. News of the sea fight not quite so bad as was rumoured yesterday – It seems we won – but with a terrible loss of life – Rough – wet Sunday – off aft'n did not go out. A Sgt I have in the ward – was opposite the Gas attack made by the Germans on Ap. 25- 27 – Soon after the gas was let out the wind changed so that it was blown back over their own lines. He said it was a sickening sight to see the men lying in heaps. It took 4 rows of ambulances – all their time night & day to take them away – Rather beautiful that it was their men & not ours. Very rough sea – much too rough for bathing. Thank goodness, lets me off another day.

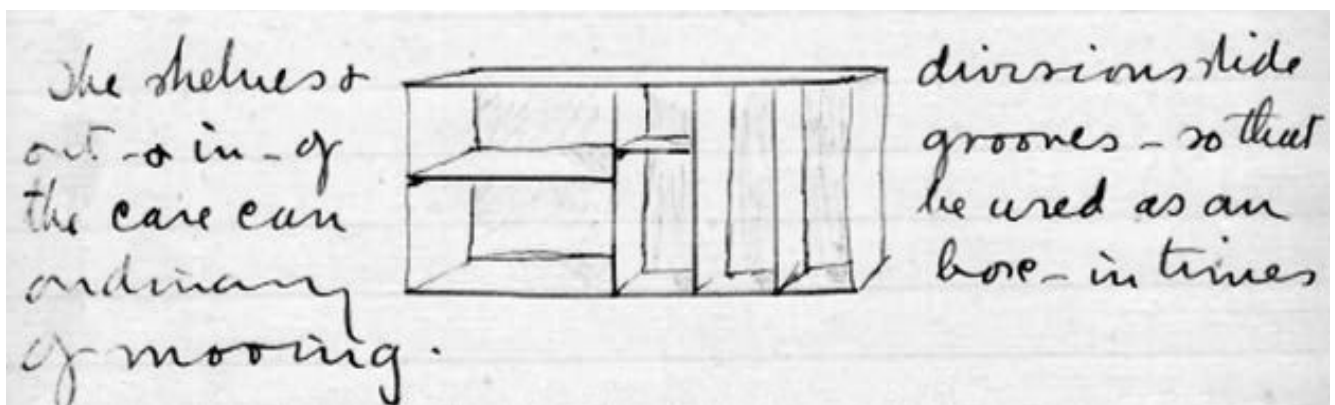
[June] 6. Half a gale of wind blowing - a tremendous sea - rain or spray beating in at my window - don't know which. We are all dead beat of this eternal wind - the good thing of it is - it may be keeping the Zepps off England. My glasses came last night - thank you very much. Matron had a parade of out door uniform yesterday - & found some people sadly equipped -

one so that she is not to be allowed to go on leave until she has more uniform uniform. Convoy of between 2 & 3 hundred in y'day. No very serious cases. Some of the men say that we & the Germans are amassing men & guns at Hullock [*Hulluch – East of Bethune*].

[June] 7. Less than no news - just a horribly, shorthanded muddle day - all the time trying to get the place clean - there is more cleaning to do there in comparison to the number of patients, than anywhere I have ever nursed. In one house for instance - a huge stone hall to be scrubbed - four flights of polished stairs to be kept immaculate - landings & all rooms the same, that is 9 rooms & 2 kitchens - & when all is said & done - it is the accomodation for only 28 patients - The next house is as bad - the 3rd worse - & the fourth - worst of all - except the woodwork is scrubbed & not polished - If only I could have a couple of good sized marques [*marquees*] - & be damned all this housework - we could get on with the patients - The Army! No - I won't start on it. I started doing a job of carpentering in the coal house in my off time to relieve my feelings on the subject - A patient was telling me - the other day - about a doctor their regiment had - who drank - & took no trouble with his patients - ordered M&D [*Medicine & Duty*] for everything. One man died (who had been terribly neglected) & the doctor was court marshalled "and" said my man "e got 'orribly acquitted & was sent 'ome."

[June] 8. Lord Kitchener & all on board the Hampshire were blown up off the Orkney Iles on Tuesday evening. No survivors - I wonder if there was a Spy on board - If so he succeeded in giving a famous man a glorious death - & many suffered at the giving. Meanwhile do the Germans think for one moment, that the burden of the War was on poor Kitchener's shoulders? Aged over 70.

[June] 9. A very beautiful morning out to sea. The sun shining on the passing steamers, about 8 at present & such a lot have already passed. The sea is green & choppy - sky very blue with white flecks of cloud. I'm quite content with it for my birthday Day. No excitements yesterday. I only hate the Annex buildings more & more every day. Letters from Mother, Min & Madge & baby last night. Funnily enough - Mother has sent me - what I was going to buy - a pair of grey gloves & Madge & baby have sent me a champion needle book - with fine big bobbins & needles that I have great use for - in carpentry as well as sewing. I got them last night but saved them to open on my veritable birthday. A Destroyer & 7 or 8 other vessels - which some said were submarines - they weren't though - unless they have changed very much in form - of late - were up & down several times - I finished my cabinet yesterday - all but the polishing - & hope to hand it over to Matron today - I have stained it dark oak - made of a concoction of Condly - methylated spirit - & iodine. It looks like this now.



[The shelves & divisions slide out - & in - of grooves
- so that the case can be used as an ordinary box - in times of moving.]

I have just spotted the airship parading up & down over the sea - evidently there is a suspicion of submarines about.

[June] 10th. Received a nice budget of birthday letters last night from Lil, Madge. Baby. Hilda & Amy very nice indeed. Lena Ashwell's concert party came yesterday & were a great success. I went for one song & the

Ventriloquist & thought them good. In the evening Marcey, Constable & I walked to the garden - of the English lady & gathered armfuls of lovely flowers - I kept some roses & honeysuckle for my own room [-] they are a great joy. Sunset grand last night - morning rough - it has been raining, but is off again. Rumour of a convoy coming at 9a.m. - perhaps we shall all be called for first breakfast - Hope not - it is such a crowd. Matron is much pleased with her cabinet, & really now it is polished with beeswax & turpentine it does not look very unlike old oak. Here comes the fiend with the bell - wonder if he will knock & say "Convoy - Sisters please" which is the polite way of saying - "you have got to get up for first breakfast" but anyway that is preferable to turning out at 1 or 2 a.m. to admit.

Whitsunday 11th. Many happy returns to Hilda! dear me she is 36 - & not married yet! We had a convoy in yesterday morning & sent about 300 away to England in the evening. I did not get any very bad cases in the Annexe. They did in Casino 5. One poor man - shot in the head. There was only a tiny dry wound the size of a small pea - to be seen - in the corner of the eye - but his brain was hit. He did not know who he was - or where he lived - only babbled incomprehensible words. Another with a fractured skull - & one hand blown off - both on the D.I. list - as well as the poor boy they had in the other day with a bullet near the heart, so near - that when they operated to get it out, they could not, because they dare not go nearer the heart than they were. Cold rough day. Received a photo of Mrs. C. & one of the 4 children - excellent of all - in such a nice smelly case. Our little chapel has been repainted & looks much more like a chapel now. Heny & Burnett received orders & left for Étaples yesterday. Take warning - & don't accumulate possessions - you will be sorry when it comes to packing all your worldly goods in a couple of hours.

[June] 12th. Letters (with illustrations) from the Twinnies last night. Work slack. Have closed A, B & C Annexes - & have only 16 patients in D. Perhaps I will take a half day if things keep quiet - today or tomorrow. There is great excitement - in watching the fishing boats get off, on a day like this, rough - full high tide - strong wind - the wrong way. They are shoved off as far as possible then pull themselves through the big shore waves with a haul off rope, then when they drop that, one man punts at the stern for all he is worth, while the other two fix the mast & hoist the sail, then quick as lightning the man ships his oar, & fixes the rudder - then if the wind is kind - off they go - if not they stand & the sails quiver - until they get right with the wind, then it is the finest yacht race ever you saw to see half a dozen of them trying to get round the corner first. I can see trouble brewing. 2 S.Os (sick officers) are bathing, right under our windows - & it is our time & place & it is in Orders that "Mixed bathing is strictly forbidden." They probably don't know that these are our quarters - one is a very good swimmer. Goodbye.

A man told me the other day, that a whole lot of American ammunition had to be called in. Some of the shells did not explode some were filled with saw dust & in many cases - the nose & time fuse only flew over to the enemy - & the shell burst on our side.

[June] 13. Have just opened my window doors, had to shut them at 2 a.m. as I was being soaked with rain. The wind has blown about 1/2 a gale all night with gusts of rain, when it had time to throw it down. In spite of the high sea the S. O. is bathing - & having a fine game of pitch & toss. The boats appear not to be going out. Work calm. I came off duty at 4:30 & took Matron for a walk to Benouville. We walked all round the chateau grounds, so thick with trees, that we were almost out of the wind for a short time. Had a letter from Agnes, the girl who taught me lace making at Bailleul, she asks for an immediate answer. I have forgotten her surname - & address. Excellent Russian news - we have begun a heavy bombardment on our front. Does it mean the beginning of the end - there is a long streak of red from the shore going out to sea. Has the bathing Officer been dashed to bits - & all that is left of him is a streak of blood! Or on second thoughts it may be a line of brown seaweed.

[[June] 14th. Took the 1/2 day y'day - Walked to Villainville with Marcey. It was a rather enjoyable grey day - windy - going, but as happened to us once before - on the way back a terrific rain storm swept over us when we were still 5 miles from home. However we clung to our flowers - & arrived after a time in an awful state of wetness. It was through my mack & all

my clothes to my skin. Marcey was the same so we took an outfit of dry clothes to the baths – had good hot baths - & felt like Saints in our dry things.



[Just look at the
rain – I am
carrying the
foxgloves]

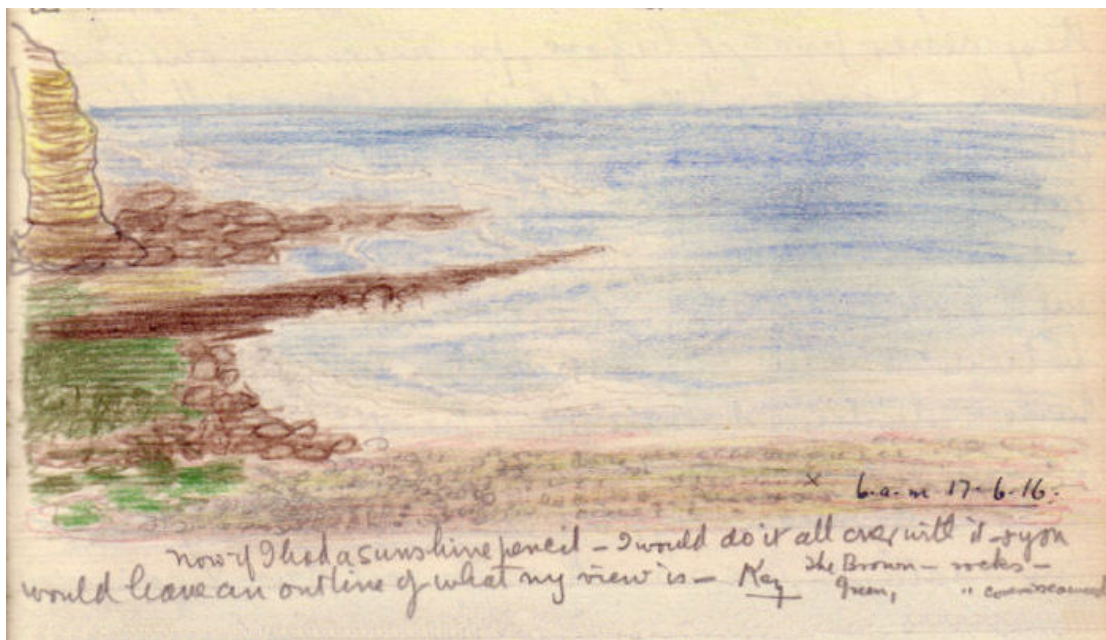
Rumour of a convoy today. Very rough day – no boats out - no man batheing. We had tea at the same place Matron & I did at Villainville. The man's brother had been home on leave from Verdun. Of his section of 180 – only 5 are left. Another man home on leave – wrote after he got back to say – while he was away all the rest of his section fell. So leave saved his life that time. Once at Verdun they were 3 days without rations. They must have been done up! I forgot to say – Marcey and I had a lift - in the funniest little cart - on our way outward bound. The old man was just a little bit drunk - & was very keen to take us to Criquetot where he lived – And he could tell his wife – he was content he had now two English wives. We would have gone if the weather had looked less threatening but it meant two more miles each way. The old man sat over the edge his side – so did I mine & Marcey had about 3 inches in the middle, it was a very small turn out. A French Officer dashed past in a smart dog cart & stopped & saluted - & I fancy wanted to ask us to change into his cart, but we gave a final sort of bow - & he looked as if he couldn't collect much English. We preferred our old drunky.

[June] 15th. Extract from last night's Orders "all clocks will be so that 11 p.m. will become 12 midnight.." and so it did – At least – some of us put our watches on at bedtime from 8:30 to 9:30 - & this morning I woke at 6 instead of 5:30 – so the jerk was not so sudden. It must have given them great joy on night duty to move the clock on – Yesterday from 6 p.m. we were officially recognized as a 950 – instead of 750 bedded hospital. Our share – in the annexes – amounted to putting 60 mattresses down – with blankets which gave us a good deal of furniture moving to do.

In the evening I went for a walk with Matron along the Havre Rd. to a little old village called ?. We looked over the church - & decided it was very old. V.A.D. Turner – left for good – she had an auction sale the night before & made nearly 50 francs. She sold a variety of things from shampoo powders - & a dressing gown – to the mat on the floor – which belonged to the Hotel – & a candlestick she did not own – She was a nice girl but too young for this work.

[June] 16th. Very lazy day yesterday – only 4 well patients to mind instead of 195 – in my 4 homes & one of them will be going out today, so we really are ready for “The Push” – when it likes to. Did nothing exciting had no excitement by post. Occupied myself on duty last night by cutting out 8 dainty & very pretty figures of children – in old fashioned French uniforms – each wielding or holding a different weapon – They are all making a picture without words on my wall now - longside side of Queen mab – (spring fairy) – throwing flowers – down to the Earth – from the back of a beautiful big blue butterfly. & various others. If it were not for the saving of expense – I should prefer the daylight as it was. It seems so silly to go to bed in the sunshine.

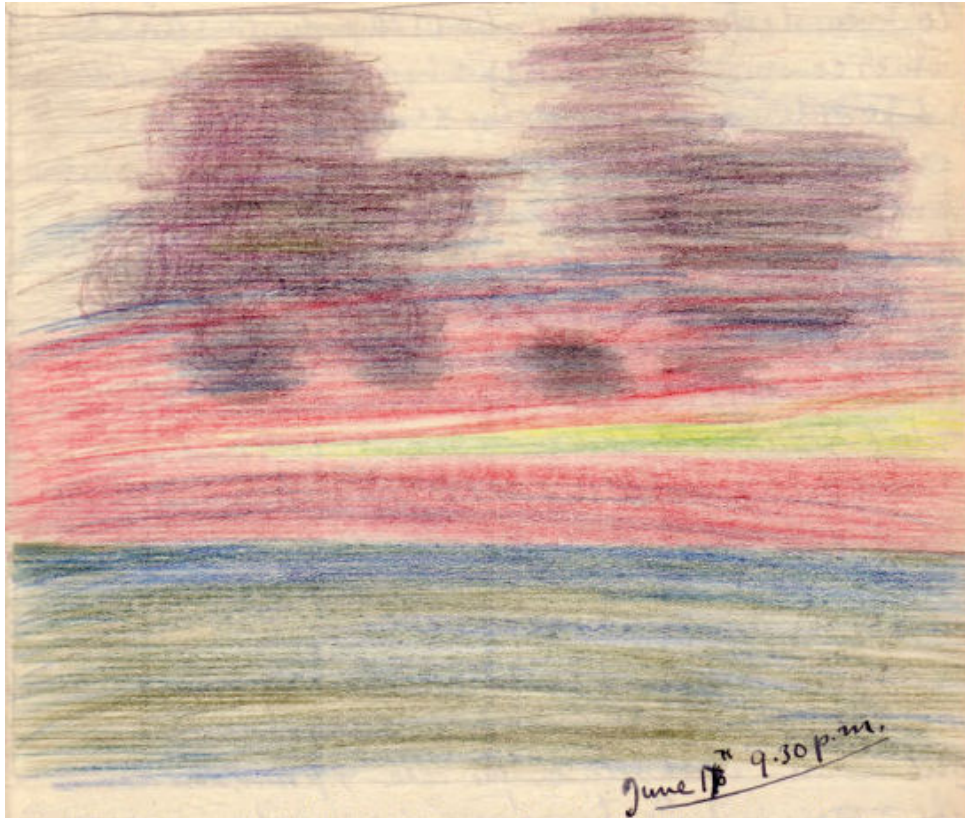
[June] 17th. Another very quiet day. May V.A.D. helped in the Qns. so I & the 4 Orderlies had it to ourselves. Off duty from 4:30. Went for a very pleasant walk with Matron to try to find the American farm – we got within sight of it – but had not time to go all the way. We asked one farmer – whom we found pottering about in his garden – if his were it. He seemed much pleased that such an idea had entered our heads - & he & his wife were most kind, showed us over the farm - & hoped we would come again. We had a wild windy walk home over the cliffs. Still blowing, but sunny & bright this morning. The bishop of Rum-ti-foo is coming to tea with us today. He means to make the acquaintance of all Sisters & M.O.s in France - He has his work cut out!



Now if I had a sunshine pencil - I would do it all over with it - & you would have an outline of what my view is - Key The Brown - rocks - Green, [rocks] covered seaweed X Beach

[June] 18. The air is vibrant with the awe & excitement of the great Advance. The well men are being hurried back to duty [-] the others sent to England. So that all along the lines the hospitals - from Base Generals - to Clearing Stations, are prepared & standing by - to receive any number - of the poor fellows who must inevitably (it seems to us) suffer. We are all waiting breathless for Joffre to give the word of command to advance & attack - and that may be any day, may even have been given - We shall soon know. The Bishop came to tea yesterday. He is a fine man & earns reverence for what he really is touring for. He told Major Martyn, who is an old friend, that he was visiting all the chaplains & telling them to pray as they never prayed before, for success in our grand Push. He has been told something of the lines it is to be attempted on & we can take the tip & pray as we never did before. Anyway - knowing where all strength & victories are given from we may as well ask for the lion's share for our side - which we believe to be the right one. The A.O.C. band played twice yesterday - it was a great treat to all - we loved it. I went to both performances - although I was on duty in the evening, but there was nothing to do. My 3 patients are as well as the rest of us - 2 going out tomorrow.

Sunset & evening sky wonderful - on the next page [below], is bad - of what it looked like at 9.30 p.m.



I am having the day off today - bar convoy. Woke as usual at 5 - but may possibly settle down for a doss before breakfast. I have called some of the others for early service & am not getting up for it.

[June] 19th. I had the day off & thoroughly enjoyed it - breakfast in bed - church at 11, good sermon - Lunch with old Madame - A 1. First a topped up plate of petit pois - with a few new potatoes & shreds of lettuce boiled with them - & covered with plenty of fresh butter - second - a beautifully dressed salad - all sorts of greenery - & a hard boiled egg - cheese - cider - coffee. Most enjoyable. After lunch walked to Pierrefiques with Matron - a little place - 2 1/2 miles away. Very quaint old village - we went over the church - like many others it was small - only 104 seats - very plain - & old. On the way back we discussed whether or not it was possible to bear another person's mental burden. I said - yes - to help them bear it - she was not certain. Church in evening with Collins. Constable off night.

[June] 20. Even slacker day - only about 120 patients in the whole hosp - which can now extend to 1300 beds. Marcey, Constable - & 2 people you don't know had long days yesterday - & went to Caudebec. I was off in the evening & walked to meet them - got as far as Villainville - was just beginning to think I should be late for both suppers - when they appeared - & picked me up - 5 in a 4 seater - quite comfortable! Orders came at 8.30 p.m. for S.N.s Smith & Palmer - to join the Asturias at once. Palmer was in bed, Smith on night duty - however, both had many friends - & we all turned to & packed & got them off by 9.30 p.m. - not bad work either - if you saw the amount of stuff there was to pack. Smith is an absolute mad hatter - first she would not take her clubs & racket - then would - & so on - finally, she jammed her hat on all over her head - took racket under one arm - clubs under the other - & paraded across the room - "Is this the Asturias please? Thank you. Can you show me to the tennis court?" & played the fool till we were all much too weak to pack properly. In the end someone supplied an old kit bag that some one had left behind - & we put the rest of the things in it. When at last the luggage of both of them was in the Ambulance - the Red Cross driver - turned sadly to them & said "I say! I'm afraid you will be short of things, you've hardly any luggage!" Good tempered man!

A cable boat arrived yesterday - escorted by 2 torpedo boats. She was working so close in we could see the cable. The torpedo boats are creeping about - dead slow & close in - this morning - looking at Étretat perhaps - & now the fishing boats are going off - it all looks pretty.



[June] 21. Busy day. Convoy - which was supposed to come at 7 a.m. arrived at 2 p.m. - not a heavy one - I had only 7 stretcher cases - & filled up the rest of D with walkers.

Two brothers of different regiments, met in the train coming down - both were suffering from trench feet - both had been to Gallipoli - they were almost weeping for joy - when they found themselves both marked E. They deserved it. Several were suffering from shell shock. In all we have already marked 13 for E - which is fine. Kerr, my piper - who plays his pipes daily - to the great delight of Étretat, was telling me about his work - mining. They often are making saps - so close to the German ones, that they have to be quite quiet - wear rubber boots - trolleys have rubber tyres & run on wooden rails. Sometimes they hear the Germans under them - when they do they make a cross sap - let down a shaft - in mine under them - of course it all is - who happens to blow up first. We have mined an entire village - somewhere up the line where he was - when the right moment comes will blow it up Germans & all! Good. Not off duty. Sea very calm - but looks cold. Am not taking my first bathe yet.

[June] 22. Calm - warm morning fishing boats all off. We were not busy yesterday. English patients did not go. I was off in afternoon. Went to see Marcey's dress fitted, then sat on the cliffs & made lace - she darned - Matron joined us for a bit. The day was - for a wonder still & hot. After dinner Matron & I walked towards the cliffs to watch the Sunset - a glorious panorama - truly is this place called "The Hamlet of the Setting Sun." The sky & sea were just a rich and glorious sight of all colours - including shining - gold & silver - Major Segundo left for Rouen - No. 6. Gen. Major Martyn is doing his duties of Secretary & Registrar.

[June] 23. English patients did not go. There is a boat in - & 4 trainloads waiting to be put on her - so ours may not go. We hear our bombardment has started, & that our men have been practising open country fighting for some time. We have heard guns the last day or two, but hardly think they are as far off as our business ones, probably practice going on somewhere. It all looks like the awe full push. Against that - Col. Douglas - who is on the Staff & knows a good deal - says we are not going to make a push - that we are intimidating the Germans - from taking troops from this front - but personally I think & hope we shall - & have done with it - Yesterday was sultry.

[June] 24. English patients not away yet. I love the way the men talk about happenings on their own front. A poor bag of bones who is "done" & waiting for the boat was telling me about his part of the line, "Our part by Arras is better, but we must have the Vimy Ridge." I said "must we - why?" "Oh - we must have the Vimy Ridge to make things right for the Cavalry to go over - & get them on the run." "They have been sweeping our roads with their guns from ? wood - so our artillery have got to blow the wood to pieces." He talks with great interest about it all - & as if there is never a doubt that what we "must have" done - will be done. I must write to you & tell you there is a chance of ports being stopped for 6 weeks. Went for such a lovely walk - last night with Matron - Fécamp Rd. almost to Bordeaux St Clair past some fine old chateaux & glorious country. Sunset not exciting - or calming.

[June] 25. English patients went – others back to duty – leaving me with 12 – The hospitals all along the line are slack – waiting ---- for the Push. 3 more Sisters were sent up to Clearing Stations & I wish - one had been me – although in my sane moments – I know it is selfish - & all ought to have a turn – but if my chance comes to go again, I shall rejoice. But I am not going to ask to be sent anywhere.

[June] 26. In a mad hour yesterday – I beat up recruits for an early bathe today – asked Major Martyn to order the boat for 6:30 - & now! in one short hour – we must take the plunge – “orrid I call it.”

My chief occupation yesterday was hunting my senior orderly. He is a man who – when he’s good he’s very very good – but when he’s bad he’s horrid. I cannot let it go on any longer - & he will be before the Col. this morning – for – absenting himself from duty – In the Army a man is not drunk – unless he is incapable, & there is nothing between being drunk - & nothing to do with drink. Most people who were off took their tea on the cliffs – in bunches of twos, threes & fours. It is raining now but I suppose those silly donkeys of other sisters will say – we can bathe in the rain! There seems to be no escape. Went for a lovely walk with Matron last night same old way – fields – to Fécamp Rd – back by road. We have heard – distant heavy firing – I wonder if it can be the business guns – I hardly think so – our nearest front is 80 miles off – more’s the pity – there is no mistake about it – I should like to go back to a C. C. S. My view is a study in greys this morning.



[June] 27th. Quiet day. Hospital is getting very empty. We heard that our Push was to begin yesterday. BATHED - & swam to the raft & dived. Water cold – but lovely. This morning is very windy & rather rough – but I expect we shall take a dip if the boat goes out. It isn’t 6 o’c yet.



[June] 28th. The sea is calm so perhaps some of us will venture for a bathe in an hour's time. Went for a walk with Miss English – driver V.A.D. a nice girl. A youth in the ward has his 21st birthday yesterday – some gave him a party. It was a great success. There were 13 of them but 2 had to feed early – as they were leaving – so only 11 sat down together. They had a real gorge – of strawberries & cream - & cakes - & were very happy. The dear old vet. said – never had he seen such a tea – he only wished he could have had a photo of the table! They are such dear grateful creatures. I heard on good authority that in future V.A.D.s are to be paid £20 a year only. No allowances - & their camp kit to be handed in when they leave. And a good thing too, I always have felt very strongly on the subject – we trained people – hardly smelt money – for our three first years - & worked much harder. These people have had money simply pushed at them - with the result - that absolutely unsuitable ones have joined for the sake of the money. Perhaps now - each one will do what she is best at. Yes.

[June] 29th. June has been a very rough month - bluster & rain nearly all the time - We bathed yesterday afternoon - & I went for a walk alone - to Bénouville in the evening, which happened to be calm - for an hour or two - It is rough again this morning. A convoy is expected at 6.30 a.m. Something over 300. No much news.

[June] 30th. We were all called early - yesterday - Convoy - 362 was chiefly surgical - very few sick - & badly - terribly badly wounded some in many places. One poor fellow died soon after he was brought in. They tell tales of great doings at the front. We have been bombarding hard for 5 days - at the rate of 1000 shells a battery - per day - & how many batteries - hundreds upon hundreds. The Germans are getting very windy - if we send over a shell or two - they at once, or send out a small party to find their strength, they blaze away as if the general attack has begun. Also they are carrying on with their dirty tricks. Their snipers bandage themselves up - & lie out & shout for mercy - & when it is shown - start sniping our men - but not twice! & I'm afraid they have done their own wounded a bad turn.

It is 6 o'clock & I am wondering if the batheing boat will be out in 1/2 an hour - Hope not.

S.N. Williamson - joined the Staff June 27th. Sister Weirle [?] June 28th.

The sea far out is a blaze of roughness but close in it looks calm - I don't want to bathe.

One old man - who had lied about his age to be young enough to enlist - wept like a baby yesterday - when I told him - he was going to England by the next boat. All he could say was - "Oh I have been lucky." & told me once - when they had to attack, he dropped as soon as he was over the parapet - his rheumatism was so bad - & an officer hauled him up - & pushed him back over it - & neither was hit! He has a wife & 10 children to go back to - & has honestly done his bit - so good luck go with him.