

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

August 1916

AUGUST 1st. Fine calm morning for the 1st of Aug. A most queer thing passed here at 1/4 past 5. I imagine, something to do with the excitement of yesterday. All the morning & up to tea time 4 or 5 hydroplanes - & the airship were scouting busily. Just at tea time (I was at tea with Matron) there was an explosion - to those who knew - it was unmistakably a shell bursting - We were both startled nearly out of breath, & went out - to find - absolutely nothing. No one even seemed to have heard it - or wondered what it was. When I went back to the ward - the men all said - it was a bursting shell - perhaps a shot from a naval gun at sea - or a bomb - dropped - for practice by an aeroplane. One man told me he was quite sure he had seen a submarine. In the evening we heard from the coast guard on the cliff that the aircraft had been scouting for a submarine all day - & one of them had dropped a bomb on it. If so good luck & I enjoyed the noise. A convoy of 380 arrived soon after 8 o'clock yesterday morning - my share made me up to a family of 69 - so instead of a bathe it was "Convoy Sister please." & first breakfast. I wonder if some unwelcome nuisance of a person is coming to call me for a bathe. I got up soon after 5 o'clock by mistake, but am glad, because I saw that queer thing - what the break of white was - I could not make out. she was going at a decent rate.



Had a letter from you last night - So sorry you have been plagued with that beastly neuritis again.

August 2nd. Yesterday was the hottest day this summer, lovely. Off in evening went for long walk with Matron & Toby. Havre Rd - home by cliffs - sunset a glory - Ill boy - weaker & more nearly dead. Had a lovely bathe before breakfast yesterday. Again there was a man batheing! Standing order - for batheing "On no account is mixed batheing to be allowed." but as 6.30 a.m. is our time - He was the mixture, not us. The A.D.M.S. has received orders - to prepare all base hospitals - on the super expansion scale - for the next big push - which means we are to be ready to take 1600 - without turning a hair - any number at a push.

August 3rd. Yesterday was calm - & no special news. The afternoon was so hot. all I felt equal to was a bath & then to sit on the shore & watch the bathers. the women kind finish at 3. Then patients, Orderlies - Officers, all & sundry have their innings. There must have been well over 100 of them & all but about 12 could swim well - They looked like so many seals swarming round the raft - & diving off in all directions! My ill boy has got a surgical emphysema which shows - lung destruction is going on - & I am afraid he cannot put up a fight against that. Call bell! & a beautiful, beautiful sea.

August 4th. No fresh news. Hot - calm - lovely weather. Off last night - walked over the cliffs with Matron & Toby. Had a letter from the Mother of my ill boy. She asks that he may write just two words to her & she will feel more content. So I went back to the ward last night - in case he is not there this morning - & helped him do it - It is a poor little 5 words scrawl - but I hope it will please her poor soul. The Hospital Sports are to be held tomorrow bar convoy etc. Two items for Sisters - an egg & spoon race - & a table decoration competition. Our Mess is giving the prize for the Tug o'War. 6.30 a.m. A hospital ship has just slip past - looking very cool & white & beautiful.

August 5th. Ill boy - very sick & sore all day - worse. No special news - 3 sisters are already up & away to gather flowers for the decorating of their tables this afternoon.

August 6th. I'm too headachy & bored - to write my diary.

The Sports were a great success - & all went off well - & the Ordinance Band was a great treat to us all. Both my V.A.D.s - went in for the table decoration - one got 1st Prize & the other 2nd - so that was not so bad for the old Annexe - Iglu [?] (orderly) took two prizes too & came in 4th - in the 3 mile race. I did not go up until the evening, but it was all very pretty & good fun.

August 7th. I am sorry I didn't tell you more about the Sports, but will try to get some snap shots for you. Yesterday - quiet - Walk in evening to Cliff with constable. No letters - Westminster. Ill boy even worse. Two or three Sisters were promised "long days" but at suppertime a telegram came - telling of a Convoy of 400 - coming this morning so it will be "Convoy Sister Please" - & early breakfast.

The Port has been closed for 3 or 4 days - owing to submarines. A merchantman with ammunition arrived safely 3 days ago - the vessel behind him was blown to bits - & he was unable to help. I expect the Spies keep our enemies well informed of when ammunition is sent. The submarines are probably caught as there was a mail last night.

August 8th. Convoy of 400 in - Sent an English Convoy out - Busy day. I am left with a family of 64. None seriously ill - except poor Lennox, who really seems to be chained to Earth. He is so utterly weak, that even to turn his head is hard work. I wrote for him to his Mother & fiancée again yesterday, wanted him to tell me his own words - but all he said was, "I don't know what there is you could say." I knew his Mother was his greatest anxiety, & wrote "I am no stronger at all - but I have tried my hardest to take all my food & medicine, & to get well" he said "Yes - say just that I wanted her to know just that." I don't think he will be detained longer than this week, & hope not for his own sake. There was an old S.A. campaigner D.S.M. amongst my men - a Sergeant Major - a typical old soldier - Wonder if the boat will be out - it is calm enough in all conscience. Was not off duty, but went for an hour's walk with Matron from 6.30 - about which I shall hear from my M.O. If ever I am off in the evening - he tells me I had a half day off - old silly. He likes to come at the same time, sit in the same chair - find the same person writing the night report - every night. I suppose because at home - he finds the same person to talk to - he thinks he ought to here.

August 9th. It is getting uncommonly parky in the early morning - of course we must not forget that 5.30 - is really 4.30 so it would be cold. Quietish day - yesterday. sent patients to England. Off in afternoon, took tea - with old Atky (V.A.D.) - to the small woods off Havre Rd - very delightful - Yesterday morning something rather interesting - crossed our path. A biggish steamer, evidently wounded - was towed backwards - past here towards Havre. There were two mine sweepers - just in front - & an addition[al] tug in attendance. Some people say there was a submarine alongside - personally I did not see that, if so - probably - the steamer had been torpedoed - ineffectually, & the submarine had been taken. I had a terrible fierce lecture from my M.O. last night, on not being married - He is a dear old thing, & says he has found marriage - an undiluted success! So - I told him - with the saddest look I could raise - that "my day was done" - it was too late!

The sea is calm & high & strong. I have promised to be ready for a dip at 6.30, which is a nuisance - I far prefer - someone to come & persuade me!

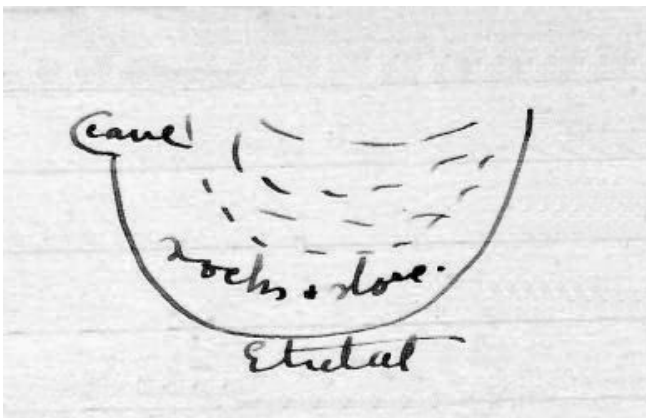
August 10th. Many happy returns of the day to Fred. I had a half day yesterday. Matron & I took tea to the beautiful, solitary bay where Miss Wallen has her hut. She is very kind & allows us to use it & all her things - so we only took milk & eatables. First we bathed, the sea was dead calm & warm - then had tea - if you like to know what - hard boiled eggs, tomatoes, cucumber - & bread & butter. We started for home at about quarter past 6 - & met Miss Wallen - with a heavy load of supper. She was having two of our Sisters out to supper. She has asked us to go some day. The sea is choppy & I don't want to bathe, but - if others do & I do not - there will be trouble.

August 11th. Nothing of note. McBride - Q.A. had orders for Wimmereux - & will go this morning. In some ways I wish it was me. Had a lovely rough bathe yesterday - sea is calmer today - Suppose in half an hour I shall be chased out. Now-a-days we help shove the boat off - it warms us up before going in to the sea. Not off yesterday - My ill boy was too ill - I thought he was going to manage to slip away - but no - he was not allowed to, poor boy - he will be vastly happier when he does. I hope he will be alive this morning, all the same - I have a letter from his Mother, he will like to know about.

August 12th. 31 days ago - Lennox came in - & he is still not able to get away. He won't be long - the bad chest attacks are more frequent now - & poor dear - he will be so grateful to be away. The last two days & nights have been sultry, & I have been glad of my morning dip to cool me down. This morning is beautifully calm. Poor old Maj. Martyn has to bathe all alone after us - he can't get any of the others to come out! He is a married man - with a large family - I don't see why he shouldn't come with us - Mrs. Grundy makes a bit of an ass of herself sometimes, I think. Went for short walk with Matron last night, then back to the ward. Toby is ill - we think he has been kicked. The old Vet - my blue corporal is attending him & he is getting better - Yesterday he gave him a dose of Epsom salts, turpentine, iodine - & olive oil - all mixed up together. He was much better for it - Flowers are lovely & in abundance. Birdy [?] left for Boulogne. We hear that the firing we heard two nights ago - was from some of our boats probably firing at Zeppelins on their journey to & from England - There were three outbreaks of heavy firing - at 9 p.m. 10 p.m. & 2.30 a.m. Looks rather like it - Now I must get ready for my dip.

August 13th. Lost my pen yesterday. Hottest day we have had - bathed before breakfast & in the afternoon too. Capt Scott came to examine Lennox in the evening - wish to Goodness he would leave him alone - Toby better. Port closed! more submarines about.

August 14th. Pen not found. The firing & explosion we heard about 4 days ago - was a steamer of ours being blown up by a submarine - there were six hidden away there & our vessels fired at them - I don't know if any have been caught - The Port is still closed. Lennox in statu quo.



Marcey, Constable & I - took tea to a cave & were cool for once - It is underwater at high tide - & the water was dripping through the rocks all the time - it is a huge cave could hold 100 people without turning a hair & we just sat - & looked at the heat & Étretat & got cooler & cooler & cooler. It was a very fairyland of a cave - with all sorts of anemonies & small shell fish clinging to the rocks - when we touched the anemonies they let out a tremendous squirt of water at us!

August 15th. Many happies to the twins. Yesterday was quiet in the hospital. Matron is - on the Sick list - with an over strained heart. We are all terribly sorry - but I do not in the least wonder at it - after all she has gone through & done - & the little leave she has had. As I know her I am doing her washings & bed makings - morning & evening - while my wards are not heavy. She & Lennox are my two bad patients. English patient left yesterday although the Port is still closed. Palmer - Allen - Ginboal [?] Smith & Leedam - visited us - from the Asturias - they are looking fat & well. Two submarines have been caught - so I suppose there are still four more to be rounded up. Now I must get up betimes, to see about my private patient before breakfast.

Port open. Huge mail in last night. The early mornings are getting very grey. It is low tide & the men crab hunting on the rocks - look like big crabs themselves creeping about in their red, sail cloth garments. Bathing still off - owing to roughness of sea - Yesterday was a scampering busy day - for me - up early - did Matron for the day - when I was going to be off -

had to be back in ward – for Maj. Martyn & Capt Scott to explore Lennox's chest. Evening – bathed Matron – then flew on duty again – poor Lennox is bad. Everywhere – seemed to mean at the top of the house – except Lennox – Matron is at the very top of the Blanquet – I am at the top of the Blanquet Annexe & then on duty – everything is up & down – the two houses I have open. But – when no one watches – if you take the stairs at the bounce – they are not so tiring - & I am more than pleased to do just all I can for matron. Another Sister off duty. Hickman.

August 17th. Lennox worse – Matron the same. Off in evening. Glorious day. Bathing boat out again – I was too busy.

August 18th. No news – coldish – roughish – day. Off in afternoon did nothing. Matron & Lennox – in statu quo.
PEN FOUND.

August 19th. I see by yesterdays Casualty lists that 4 nurses have been wounded. I knew one of them – Miss Tunley was Matron at No. 10 Stationary when I was there. Funnily enough – she was told by a fortune teller there, that she would be sent up the line & would be wounded! That was nearly 2 years ago & she has been to Egypt – Nice & all over the place – in between. A convoy is expected today. 8 V.A.D.s were to have had long days but convoy will put the lid on it! One thing it is rough & raining, so they need not grieve quite so much. Letter from Fred.

August 20th. We had a Convoy of 450 in on Saturday, making my family up to 79. As we have only 2 orderlies we were quite busy enough. Matron is still my Out patient. She has improved much in her week of complete rest - & may be allowed to wash herself after today. The morning is rose coloured & beautiful & I shall have to get right far away – for a breather. The sea has been too rough for batheings but it looks calmer today. I feel sunk in debt in the way of letters & must try to write some today. Poor Lennox is even worse only his heart & eyes are alive – all other of him is dead poor dear.

August 22nd. quiet day. Did not want to bathe – did - & loathed it – shan't today if I don't want to. Matron up for the first time yesterday. She looks none too well - & my private opinion is that she ought to be sent away – for a long rest. Maj. Martyn – has fixed a good map of the Western front – on the wall of my bunk – so now we shall know all about where we are!

August 23rd. Lennox died soon after 8 o'clock last night. Never have I seen such a slow painful death. It was as if the boy was chained to Earth for punishment. Towards the end it was agony for him to draw the little gasp breaths - & I felt I must clap my hand over nose & mouth - & quench the flickering flame. I am very glad for the boy to be away. Had a glorious bathe yesterday afternoon. No letters – no news. Matron better.

August 24th. Quiet day. Had earache all yesterday – it is the size of half a pigeon's egg (sideways) this morning, but less painful – too rough & rainy to bathe.

August 28th. Quite a gap in my diary – since I last wrote – I have had a 1/2 day - & a long day – spent both of them fomenting my ear – yesterday morning Maj. Martyn opened it with a knife since when it has been vastly more comfortable, but I'm as deaf as an adder in both ears – One because I have wool in it - & the other – I have a cold. Collins, Cummings & Armstrong received orders to join Nos. 4 – 5 & 9 Hospitals – one each. The weather has been rough & rainy. There is going to be a Board on Maj. Martyn today – to consider the advisability of giving him 3 weeks sick leave. His heart goes wrong at times. I had a letter from Mrs. Sharpe last night, offering me - lavender - sweet lavender - which I shall accept. Hope you are all well - this weather is very exhaustive.