

## Edith Elizabeth Appleton Diaries - Volume 4 (21 June to 27 December 1918)

### September 1918

**Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>.** Bullecourt has been taken – and lost – Peronne is ours – and lots of other places – Roye – Noyon – Mont St Quentin – lots of prisoners taken! & still the tide of wounded comes in & passes on – to England, or to its last resting place. September is here & the War not nearly ended – God speed the Allies to do something to stop it before it's 5th winter! A Corporal in my ward tells how a Chink was killed in an air raid – the Chinese Compound was close to a huge German Prisoners cage – at the death of their man they broke bounds – got to a bomb dump, equipt themselves & left not one alive in the German cage. We are still flooded out with Germans – and talk about the “Blighty smile” it sits as surely on the face of prisoners going to England as on our boys. Yesterday I was watching a huge bus that carries about 40 sitting cases. The two last rows were Bosches – & they were all smiles & just as excited looking as our own men.

**Sept 4<sup>th</sup>.** The Battle proceeds – all along the line & in Russia – one feels breathless & nervous of shouting too soon but up to yesterday the Allies were sweeping forward, All hospitals are kept at top speed – receiving & passing on wounded – all those not likely to be fit to fight in 10 days – Blighty – others C.C. Even so they say thanks to aeroplanes & tanks, our casualties are light for the Victories won.

The Germans got news that we were bringing out a new tank – so our people wrote many accounts of the “whippet” a small new one in use – to throw dust in their eyes – of the real new ones – that we are now using. They are big enough to carry 15 Infantry men as well as their own crew & are so big that up to the present they have not come to the trench too big for them to cross.

We are absolutely flooded out with Germans, and I imagine hundreds are being killed. A Canadian I had in yesterday was surprised when I told him how many we had – he said they had orders to kill as many as they could & said they killed them just as fast as they could. God help us.

I went crabbing last night with a V.A.D. It is great fun – you scramble about over rocks & poke them out with a stick – we brought about 9 home of an edible size. Besides it is very beautiful there in the evening with the Sunset making pretty pictures & so far away from everybody. They are still nibbling at our Staff – I suppose to lend help to the C.C.Ss. – quite right although we are so busy we don't know which way to turn.

**Sept 11<sup>th</sup>.** The busy time continues although the last two train loads have had quite a percentage of what we call “I.C.T.” that is such things as poisoned sore – or tears of barbed wire – but an empty bed is still an unknown thing. I don't know how the soldiers keep it up but I think hospital staffs are beginning to feel a bit done – but still we would much rather them get on with the war – If it means ending it sooner. We have got the funniest old Scot in the ward – shot through the stomach – has to be dressed often. He knows each time exactly how he wants to be laid & tells us – “on ma right side – with ma bxttxm theyre” – or sometimes he does not say which side. “Poot ma bxttxm theyre, & I'll be right” so we do exactly as he says & he is quite content.

Rogers – that Sandwich boy – is still running a temp between 103° & 105° – but I hope he will pull through. The newspaper news is good still – but we don't seem much nearer the end of the War. No news of Taff – I suppose he is still in the thick of it.

Quite a well off wounded relative said she would like to send me something for the ward – I warned her – I really did not know the prices of things & said I should like a gramophone. She has promised it. I hope it is not too expensive – her husband is Head master of a School & the children like collecting.

**12<sup>th</sup>** Pouring rain! This will put a stopper on our “Push” but I fancy we are in better position than the Bosche. Looking down a row of beds yesterday – No. 1 was an Australian – 2 a S. African – 3 a N. Z. er – 4 a Scot – 5 & 6 Canadians – 7. Irish – 8 E[nglish] – 9 Portuguese – after that it became more monotonous.

**13th** Very rough weather – I was in & out of bed a dozen times shutting the window for rain – opening it again at last, knowing it was only heavy showers. I tucked my head under my R. *[right]* arm – when it rained – the bed & floor & everything blows quite dry in the tween times. Yesterday's paper reported the Germans counter attacking. I do hope we shall get St. Quentin before the Winter sets in. It is a beautiful tousled morning – black & copper clouds & a rough sea.

Miss Eardley & I went for a rough & muddy walk last night – got caught in two deluges – luckily we were in a corn field at the time, & buried ourselves in the sheaves – found a fair number of mushrooms. We were coming home by a straight narrow lane – muddy everywhere – ponds, in parts. We scrambled along the upright banks past the ponds. An old, old Frenchman was coming towards us & was evidently very anxious to help us over the difficult parts – we met him in due course & he insisted on helping us from one side of the lane to the other – p – e – r – haps a shade less muddy than the one we were on – a dear old man – he hurried to help us along the bank I think – but as we had finished with that for the time he helped us over whatever we happened to be on.

Rogers still critically ill – I had a letter from his Father yesterday – & a box of chocolates from poor old Limbrick's (now dead) fiancée.

Really this push makes one's correspondence a bit heavy. The Padre is fine – out after all. The D.I.'s relatives, like to hear from those who nurse their dear ones.

**Sept 19th** The last few days have been quieter although busy. All our American Sisters & 3 of our own have been taken – an old friend of mine of 45 C.C.S. days has come here for duty. She went on leave from her Ambulance train & asked for a move when she came back. The strain was too great for her – most nights in dug outs, & no steady work to counterbalance things.

The weather has been hot. Several N.Z.ers came on the last convoy.

Have you ever read Kipling's poem called "Trawlers". It is true to life – We see it done in our view. The good little trawlers are up & down the fair way scooping up mines & seeing that all is safe – then at evening a huge convoy – often over 40 big steamers shoot across from Dieppe to somewhere in England.

I had two spine cases in a month ago apparently wounded the same & paralysed the same. One died in a few days – one is much better – & going to England today. Three head cases all looking to be equally wounded – one got (apparently) quite well – one became childish & traveled home – well – but 10 years younger than when he came out & the third is dying by quarter inches poor fellow! Mother & wife both in N.Z.

**Sept 24th** The morning is beautiful. Golden red clouds making golden red patches on the steely calm sea & little ships sailing past – & it is cold & lovely. News up to date is good – work steady & quite enough of it.

**25th** Had a half day off yesterday & enjoyed it. Went with Sister Payne in the afternoon to the pier – tide was very high & rough yet many people were fishing. There was a school of sprats in the sea & it was a case of catch who catch could, between the fishers on the pier & the porpoises in the sea. They used no bait – simply lowered a line, with many hooks on & drew it up with the little sprats hanging on. One man had a sort of shrimp net which he lowered deep – by the four corners – but he hadn't much luck.

It was wild & glorious there. The end of the pier is railed off – dangerous. Each big wave made it wheeze & creak. In harbour was quite a big Brigantine Norwegian drew 14 feet of water. The Harbour is a joy at high tide with all the steamers & fishing boats in & it did feel very tempting to step on some vessel or another & fly the country!

In the evening Miss Williams (Ass. Mat.) & I walked to the country – gathered flowers – picked mushrooms & returned for first dinner & an early bed. A convoy was scheduled to arrive during the night so we may expect a busy day today. My ward was already pretty full. The mornings are getting very dark now & I shall be quite pleased when the clock is moved back – 5 days time. 7 o'clock up.