

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

November 1918

Nov. 3 I am sorry to say Miss Williams - our Ass. Matron - has been moved to 72 Gen at Trouville - thanks to those young villains who let her down by dancing the other day. On Nov. 1st she & Matron & I walked to La Madeleine to tea. I expect I have told you all about the place - a glorious unspoiled forest, 7 kilometres beyond Eu. We went on All Saints Day. All people were dressed up - finer than on Sunday - & were going in huge groups & families to honour their dead - The cemeteries were a blaze of flowers when they had finished. The news of the Surrender of Turkey came on that day - so they ended in making quite a day of rejoicing of it & French, British, Belgian & American flags were flying everywhere. The men off our yesterdays convoy (we had two convoys in yesterday) were all very cheerful. They had come from Le Cateau - & said that the enemy there was putting up hardly any fight at all - wise enemy!

Bulgaria	entered	Oct 1 - 1915.	Armistice took effect	Sept 30 1918
Turkey	“	Nov 5th 1914.	“ “	Oct 31 st “
Austria	“	July 28th-29th 1914.	“ “	Nov 4 th “
Germany	“	“ “	“ “	Nov 11 th “

Nov 9th There is a whole lot of peace talk going on but they don't seem to be getting on with it. The news has been absolutely glorious & yesterday we have had lots of convoys down - chiefly not very severe cases. & my head has been too much like a pumpkin with neuralgia - to tell a single word of anything that may have happened - they have swarmed in & swarmed out & some have had influenza & all are very cheerful about the news. Rather helpful for us! the German navy has mutinied - badly.

Nov. 12th. Peace! Thank God for that!

It feels very queer too - kind as if your elastic had snapped.

Matron & I took some sick Sisters to Abbeville yesterday - leaving here at 4 a.m. & reaching the A.T. at 6.30 a.m. The moment we stopped at the Siding - we were pounced upon by the Ambulance drivers & told we were much behind the times for not knowing the news - they had been told the night before.

We shifted the responsibility of our load to the Sister on the train - & then went back to the nurses Home - my old billet - & told them the news - then to the Sisters hospital & told them. We stayed there to breakfast - walked about Abbeville & I showed Matron the various air raid damages. I lost my watch - not mine either - & then we had a lovely ride back. Evidently the folk everywhere had heard the news - French girls were embracing Tommies, & French children blew kisses to us as we passed - French soldiers waved ecstatically, & looked as if - for two pins, or if we were not going so fast - they would climb aboard & kiss us. We came back to Treport only a few minutes after the news reached it & in less than an hour the whole place had gone stark mad - Flags of all nations flying from everywhere - Sirens blowing - in long shrieks - short shrieks - jerks - every way.

All the bands turned out & processed along the Camp - with convalescent patients & oddments of French following. Ambulances (allowed to carry 8 sitting - or 4 lying - & 1 sitting) bedecked with flags & streamers, & about 16 inside & as many as could manage to stay there on the roof - paraded solemnly round & round the roads - the men cheering & shouting & flag waving.

In the afternoon I think many had drunk the good health of the occasion & the 'Entente' spirit was well to the fore - French soldiers & Tommies - & French girls - walking about in long lines - locked in each others arms. Even the motor lorries went mad & bedecked themselves with flags.

In the Music Room - we bought 6 bottles of good port & when the lights were up we made the

longest-in patient - a Sergeant of the Naval Div - make a little speech - & they all drank - to Peace. In some wards they had a special tea.

If only my gramophone would come! We are to have one more convoy - direct from the line - & then — local sick.

Here endeth the fighting part of the War - GOD SAVE THE KING.

Nov 16th. On the 14th I was detailed to go as escort to a wounded Officer - being transferred from here to a hosp[ital] in Paris. His people live there.

We had a reserved carriage & no change which was a blessing - the stretcher rested well along one seat & I had the other to myself. The train was slow & we took 6 hours to do the journey - but with a nice luncheon hamper & books the time passed all right for him - he was a fidgety youngster. The hospital he has gone to is in the Hotel Astoria - where the Kaiser had ordered lunch for a certain date in 1914 - the day he entered Paris. In those days it was a spies H.Q. & they had a wireless station on the roof.

Paris looked fine! Such a wide streeted clean looking city & flags, flags, flags, everywhere. We drove right through the City & it was all brightly lit - hundreds of beautiful cars dashing about. Shops gay - I should very much have liked to do some shopping, but had no spare time.

The Hendrys live right through Paris through the Bois de Boulogne - & beyond the city gates. They have a delightful house - beautifully furnished. I had a small suite of rooms - bed-room - sitting room - & dressing room. My train left before 8 next morning - so I had to be up - by times. Mr. Hendry was a charming host - we started too early for the station & he drove me all through the Bois de Boulogne & round all the principal parts of Paris to let me see everything there was to see. Hundreds of German field guns - Minnewerfer [*Minenwerfer* ("mine launcher") *short range mortars used extensively during the First World War by the German Army*], French mortars, one big gun - (not a Bertha) - a whole long line of Bosche aeroplanes - a Bosch tank & a sand bag air raid shelter - quite the size of no 1 Hamilton Avenue - was hung thick with Bosche tin hats! The Statue of Liberty was draped in the National Flag - everyone seemed gay. They are going to have a great Fête day on Sunday - I should like to have seen it then!

The 13th. Sister H. W. & I had a good half day & walked to the Madeleine for tea. Yes - thank the Good God - we are nothing like as busy now - 20 of my beds have been taken down & put into store! So now I have only 40 beds & 40 patients & some of them will be going soon. It's a funny thing - talking about "as thy day so shall thy strength be" while we were so busy - we could have any number of badly broken people each with 5 or six wounds & get on with it with a swing - now - it almost bores me to put on a simple fomentation.

Nov. 19th What a difference! I have only 40 beds in my ward now - instead of 60 & the work is decreasing in heaviness. Of course we have & shall have for some time - heavy surgical cases - in - but - it is a very different matter nursing them, when they are well established - no shock to contend with & no convoys in khaki all smothered in mud & blood - straight through from the fight.

They all come down nicely washed & in pyjamas now. They don't mind half as much being marked "Base" or "C.C." (con. camp). No, things are quite altered. Instead of bustling off a large number to England every day & getting all our beds filled up straightaway - we are keeping them. Have not sent any to England for four days now.

We are starting days off. My last V.A.D. has hers tomorrow & then if all be well I shall take the next day. Think of it! A whole day. Poor old Lil - I wish she could have one too & that we could spend it together.

My room mate is in the Sick Sisters Quarters with a terribly bad sore throat.

20th. A very sudden & merry thing happened last night. Ten of the M.O.s took themselves to a Peace dinner in the town - the rest were a little hurt that they were neither told about it nor asked to it - so two of them had an idea of being equal with them. Fled to Matron & asked her to come & bring 7 sisters with her - to an impromptu dinner. I met Matron - as I was on my way to dinner - wearing a worried look to find a 7th - she had caught 6. So here went - instead of going to dinner at 7.15 I simply flew back to my room - changed & was down before 1/2 past

to join the rest at the "Impromptu". It was great fun - the A.D.M.S. & the D.A.D.M.S. were both there & enjoyed the fun like anything. After dinner - Col. Thorboon - the R.C. padre - S. Stephenson & I - played Bridge. Some played the rowdyist game of vingt & un you ever heard & some sang. 11.15 - in came the diners out! & their expressions were a study! Mr. Marriott - who took me in to dinner - has spent 17 years in China, & is most interesting on the subject. If a Chinaman who is sentenced to death can raise 50 Dollars (?) - he can always get some one to take his place - many of them will accept 30 dollars & give up their life in exchange, Also if you tip the executioner highly enough he will do the job at one blow - otherwise he is not so particular.

The Chinese like us British & most important ports where Mr. Marriott has been are held by British. He says the British Prestige is very high indeed since we have beaten the Germans at their own game of War. During the War the Japanese have been on the fence ready to side with the stronger Power - now they have plumped for the Allies.

There is a dense fog this morning & the Moon is shining full on it - weird.

I rather like impromptu Peace dinners.

Nov. 22. Yesterday I had the day off & thoroughly enjoyed it. My kind people sent up breakfast from the ward then until 10 o'clock I chiefly slept - it was too cold to put as much as a nose out of bed. Then I got up & Swanzy & I went to the Casino to lunch & after joined several folk who had the half day off. We walked through the Tank Camp to Bois de Cire. It was a frosty afternoon with golden sunshine & the autumn tints showed up to perfection. We went to a quaint little Hotel for tea which is kept by a charming old man & his wife. They are rather a picturesque couple - he played the gramophone to us while she prepared tea. It was quite dark before we left & no moon & no lights made it a bit difficult to find the way but we did all right & got home soon after 7 o'clock. Early to bed & slept like a log.

The great excitement in Treport yesterday was the huge catch of herrings - boat after boat came in to harbour laden with them. The sea was dead calm - barrows - barrels - baskets - full of them & heaps - just on sails - being sold to the people - everyone - from toddlers upwards seemed to be carrying herrings.

I judge by the ripe melon sky & the frost on everything that we are in for another cold day and it IS cold.

25th We sent off a batch of wounded to Blighty two days ago & filled up with medical cases yesterday.

What a difference! What a mixture! We still have nearly a dozen wounded left - too bad to be moved - the rest are strained hearts - bad ears - boils - etc.

Rumour is about the busiest element in camp just now - a fresh program every day. One day we are to stay as a Demobilization base - next to disband within a month - next to get out of the building - the rent of which is enormous & keep on the huts & tents & so on & so forth. That it is quite as interesting as wondering where you'll spend your summer holiday. The weather has been frightfully cold. Today is muggy & wet but warm.

I have been for some delightful walks in my off time - being less tired now-a-days.

I had a letter from Sister Nicol saying her C.C.S - 48 - had gone to Germany & she had been told that 6 of them (sisters) were to follow. She asks me to work it that either I go to Germany or that she comes here. How can I? How would I if I could? Not at all. It is best for each are to take what comes.

Nov. 29th Nov. 26th I got orders to proceed at once to No. 7 Stationary Boulogne for duty so I had to make a sudden ending at Le Treport & come.

We gave a splendid concert in the ward on the night of the 25th. Matron & many of the sisters & M.O.s came & the place was packed with patients from other wards. All went well & it was a success.

This hospital is a camp - high up - about 40 minutes walk along the Boulogne - Calais Rd. My first day here - yesterday - was one drench of heavy rain all day - it looks as if it means to start again too. What a change on a wet day - from living in a smart hotel with a roof over one's head all the time - to living in one hut messing in one a muddy walk off & working in two more a longer & muddier walk off. Instead of a private bathroom one has to walk a fair

distance through the camp to a general bathhouse – common to all. It is a ramshackle camp but everyone seems quite happy which is the great thing. I have charge of a couple of surgical huts – M.O. Major Martin – quite a pleasant young man.

There are scores of birds of passage sisters here waiting for distribution. Many have been sent to Bruges to nurse the Belgians & some will be sent into Germany when the places are ready for them. Matron here is Miss Jones whom I knew as a patient at Sick Sisters – not in my care – Ass. Matron – pleasant – whole staff all right as far as I know.

30th The night has been very cold & I missed my Cats'skin – must try for a half day - & go & search for it.

An evening off is a bit of a quandary on a wet night – our sitting room gets up to any temperature & everywhere else is cold but as soon as I feel my feet I hope to go for walks.

Quiet day yesterday – 4 patients went to England & 4 fresh ones took their places.

No letters – hope for some today.

Our Cavalry Div. that is to be part of the army of occupation they say is a glorious sight.

Beautiful horses – equipment the last word “It” [?? Ed] new lances for the lancers with new flags – King's & Queen's head on the top of each lance. At present it is on Show in Paris. I should very much like to go & see it.