

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

File 5 War will not tear us apart

The Send-Off p. 64

Down the close darkening lanes they sang their way
To the siding-shed¹,

And lined the train with faces grimly² gay. [...]
We never heard to which front these were sent;
Nor there if they yet mock what women meant
Who gave them flowers.

Shall they return to beatings of great bells
In wild train-loads³?

A few, a few, too few for drums and yells⁴,

May creep⁵ back, silent, to village wells⁶,
Up half-known roads.

Wilfred Owen, *Poems*, 1918

1. hangar 2. joyless 3. cargaisons de trains 4. cris 5. walk slowly 6. Puits

Dear Roland...p. 66

Buxton, 31 August 1915

Mother says she doesn't know how two people dare to be engaged who have only been together for short times at long intervals. Six days is the longest I have ever been with you...

I keep trying in quiet moments to recall your face to my mind. I wonder why it is so difficult, my dear one, when I can remember ordinary & uninteresting people quite well. . .

When I do manage to revisualize you it is only in sudden flashes which are tantalising¹ by their transitoriness². I don't know why, but I can remember you best of all as you were on that Sunday night when you came down looking so sleepy and dusted off³ Mrs Leighton & I to bed!

Vera

Letter from Vera to Roland, 1915

1. both desirable and unattainable 2. brevity 3. send

« Violets » p. 67

Written by Roland Leighton to Vera Brittain.

Violets from Plug Street Wood¹,
Sweet, I send you oversea.
(It is strange they should be blue,
Blue, when his soaked² blood was red,
For they grew around his head:
It is strange they should be blue.)
Think what they have meant to me –
Life and Hope and Love and You
(And you did not see them grow
Where his mangled³ body lay,
Hiding horrors from the day;
Sweetest, it was better so.)
Violets from oversea,
To your dear, far, forgetting land
These I send in memory
Knowing you will understand

Roland Leighton, "Violets", 1915

1. Ploegsteert Wood was a sector of the Western Front in Flanders.
2. very wet
3. mutilated

« Perhaps » p. 67

Perhaps some day the sun will shine again,
And I shall see that still the skies are blue,
And feel once more I do not live in vain,
Although bereft¹ of You.

Perhaps the golden meadows² at my feet
Will make the sunny hours of spring seem gay,
And I shall find the white May-blossoms³ sweet,
Though You have passed away.

Perhaps the summer woods will shimmer bright,
And crimson roses once again be fair,
And autumn harvest fields a rich delight,
Although You are not there.

Perhaps some day I shall not shrink⁴ in pain
To see the passing of the dying year,
And listen to Christmas songs again,
Although You cannot hear.

But though kind Time may many joys renew,
There is one greatest joy I shall not know
Again, because my heart for loss of You
Was broken, long ago.

Vera Brittain, "Perhaps", 1916

1. *privé* 2. *prairies* 3. *aubépines en fleur* 4. be reduced

The 100-year friendship p. 68

Manta Singh, son of a landowner in Jalandhar, Punjab, joined the Indian Army from school in 1907. Promoted to Subedar, the equivalent of Captain, he served in the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs alongside a young English officer, Lt¹ George Henderson. In August 1914, Singh said farewell to his wife and five-year-old son Assa and left for France, and his friend George went with him. [...] On 10 March 1915, they joined the first major British offensive of the war at Neuve-Chapelle.

The night before, they spoke briefly, Henderson telling Singh that they would come through together. A force of 20,000 Indians and 20,000 British captured the village but were beaten back after running out of ammunition. In three days' fighting there were more than 11,000 casualties², including 4,200 Indians.

One was Manta Singh, but when Henderson was also hit by a bullet, Singh found a wheelbarrow³ in no man's land, hauled⁴ him into it and trundled him to safety. The pair then lay together until they were rescued. [...] Sadly Henderson was recovering at a different hospital when he was told Manta had died. [...] George Henderson never forgot Manta Singh. After the war, promoted to Captain, he returned to India to make sure his friend's son Assa was being cared for, encouraging him to join the 15th Sikhs like his father.

Assa, who rose to Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Army, became friends with Henderson's son Robert and they served together with the 8th Army, fighting Nazis in North Africa. After the war Robert helped Assa move to Britain.

Inspiringly, now the third generation of their families are friends.

www.britishlegion.org.uk, 2014

1. Lieutenant **2.** dead or injured **3.** *brouette* **4.** pull with difficulty

Solidarity p. 69

Naomi and Sally are Australian sisters serving as nurses in WWI. Their friend Nettice has been sent to the “rest compound” (a mental hospital) so Naomi asks a British nurse for help.

Naomi said, “One of our friends has been put in the rest compound for no particular reason than being sweet on a blind officer. You British nurses look after the rest compound. We’d like to send a message of cheer to our friend.”

“Oh,” said Angela, “you must talk to Bea over there. She’s rostered¹ in the compound.” [...]

Bea had a less posh accent than Angela. It was Yorkshire or some such. But she was – Sally thought – by far the prettiest mental nurse a person was likely to meet. Yes, she said, she was the day nurse in the women’s compound. She knew Nettice – there weren’t many patients in there. Just nurses who’d gone a bit unsettled².

“It’s too much, said Naomi, “to ask you to let us visit. But if we gave you letters for her – letters to cheer her, I mean...”

Bea laughed. It was a lyrical laugh. “I’m in enough trouble myself,” she said. But she had not said no. Maybe just one, she conceded.

She and Angela provided the pencil and some British Red Cross notepaper.

“You write first,” Naomi said to Sally, offering her the pencil.

“For Lord’s sake,” said Bea, “don’t mention me.”

Sally wrote,

Dear Nettice,

I hope you know we are all thinking of you and we will send you some comforts if we can. It goes without saying you should not be in this position. Our minds are set on finding an answer to your situation. It must be hard to get by in the

compound. Lt³ Byers is well and says that he looks forward to seeing you again.
So do we all.

Your loving friend,

Sally Durance

Thomas Keneally, *The Daughters of Mars*, 2012

1. affecté·e (à un service) 2. perturbed, troubled 3. Lieutenant

Writing home p. 70

10th September, 1914

Oxford, England

Dear Father,

I write to you from the Officers' Training Corps at Oxford. I've done it—I've joined the army—so I might serve our country in these great times and prove myself an honorable citizen, just as you did during the South African War. You returned as a hero, and I wish to live up to your legacy¹, at least in this way. There is a real sense of adventure here, a feeling that enlisting is the right thing to do.

Will Elliott signed up as well. In fact, we'll be in the same regiment. I thought you would be glad to see me placed with my closest friend. All believe the war will come to a speedy end, so you might expect me home by Christmas [...]

Your son,

Thomas

Hazel Gaynor, *Last Christmas in Paris*, 2017

1. *héritage*

Testament of Youth p. 72-73

This is the foreword to the memoirs of Vera Brittain (see pages 66-67).

For nearly a decade I have wanted, with a growing sense of urgency, to write something which would show what the whole War and post-war period — roughly¹, from the years leading up to 1914 until about 1935 — has meant to the men and women of my generation, the generation of those boys and girls who grew up just before the War broke out. I wanted to give too, if I could, an impression of the changes which that period brought about in the minds and lives of very different groups of individuals belonging to the large section of middle-class society from which my own family comes.

Only, I felt, by some such attempt to write history in terms of personal life could I rescue something that might be of value, some element of truth and hope and usefulness, from the smashing up of my own youth by the War. It is true that to do it meant looking back into a past of which many of us, preferring to contemplate tomorrow rather than yesterday, believe ourselves to be tired. But it is only in the light of that past that we, the depleted² generation now coming into the control of public affairs, the generation which has to make the present and endeavour³ to mould the future, can understand ourselves or hope to be understood by our successors. I knew that until I had tried to contribute to this understanding, I could never write anything in the least worthwhile.

The way to set about it⁴ at first appeared obvious; it meant drawing a picture of middle-class England — its interests, its morals, its social ideals, its politics — as it was from the time of my earliest conscious memory, and then telling some kind of personal story against this changing background. My original idea was that of a long novel, and I started to plan it. To my dismay⁵ it turned out a hopeless failure; I never got much further than the planning, for I found that the people and the events about which I was writing were still too near and too real to be made the subjects of an imaginative, detached reconstruction.

Then I tried the effect of reproducing parts of the long diary which I kept from 1913 to 1918, with fictitious names substituted for all the real ones out of

consideration for the many persons still alive who were mentioned in it with a youthful and sometimes rather cruel candour. This too was a failure. Apart from the fact that the diary ended too soon to give a complete picture, the fictitious names created a false atmosphere and made the whole thing seem spurious⁶.

There was only one possible course left — to tell my own fairly typical story as truthfully as I could against the larger background, and take the risk of offending all those who believe that a personal story should be kept private, however great its public significance and however wide its general application. In no other fashion, it seemed, could I carry out my endeavour to put the life of an ordinary individual into its niche in contemporary history, and thus illustrate the influence of world-wide events and movements upon the personal destinies of men and women.

I have tried to write the exact truth as I saw and see it about both myself and other people, since a book of this kind has no value unless it is honest. I have also made as much use as possible of old letters and diaries, because it seemed to me that the contemporary opinions, however crude and ingenuous, of youth in the period under review were at least as important a part of its testament as retrospective reflections heavy with knowledge. I make no apology for the fact that some of these documents renew with fierce vividness the stark⁷ agonies of my generation in its early twenties. The mature proprieties of “emotion remembered in tranquillity” have not been my object, which, at least in part, is to challenge that too easy, too comfortable relapse into forgetfulness which is responsible for history’s most grievous⁸ repetitions. It is not by accident that what I have written constitutes, in effect, the indictment⁹ of a civilisation.

Testament of Youth, Vera Brittain, 1933

1. approximately 2. reduced 3. try 4. begin 5. despair 6. wrong 7. strongest 8. terrible
9. accusation