

**Advanced File 2 p. 192 • The Send-off**

Down the close darkening lanes they sang their way  
To the siding-shed<sup>1</sup>,  
And lined the train with faces grimly<sup>2</sup> 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-loads<sup>3</sup>?  
A few, a few, too few for drums and yells<sup>4</sup>,  
May creep<sup>5</sup> back, silent, to village wells<sup>6</sup>,  
Up half-known roads.

Wilfred Owen, *Poems*, 1918

1. *hangar*

2. *joyless*

3. *cargaisons de trains*

4. *cris*

5. *walk slowly*

6. *puits*

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 tantalising<sup>1</sup> by their transitoriness<sup>2</sup>. 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 off<sup>3</sup> Mrs Leighton & I to bed!

Vera

*Letter from Vera to Roland, 1915*

1. both desirable and unattainable      2. brevity      3. *ici*, sent

## Advanced File 2 p. 195 • Violets

Introduction: Written by Roland Leighton to Vera Brittain.

Violets from Plug Street Wood<sup>1</sup>,  
Sweet, I send you oversea.  
(It is strange they should be blue,  
Blue, when his soaked<sup>2</sup> 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 mangled<sup>3</sup> 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. *trempe*

3. mutilated

## Advanced File 2 p. 195 • Perhaps

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 bereft<sup>1</sup> of You.

Perhaps the golden meadows<sup>2</sup> at my feet  
Will make the sunny hours of spring seem gay,  
And I shall find the white May-blossoms<sup>3</sup> 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 shrink<sup>4</sup> 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*

## Advanced File 2 p. 196 • The 100-year friendship

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, Lt<sup>1</sup> 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 casualties<sup>2</sup>, including 4,200 Indians.

One was Manta Singh, but when Henderson was also hit by a bullet, Singh found a wheelbarrow<sup>3</sup> in no man's land, hauled<sup>4</sup> 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.** *blessés ou morts*

**3.** *brouette*

**4.** pull with difficulty

## Advanced File 2 p. 197 • The Daughters of Mars

Introduction: 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 rostered<sup>1</sup> 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 unsettled<sup>2</sup>.

“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. Lt<sup>3</sup> 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

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 legacy<sup>1</sup>, 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

<sup>1</sup>. *héritage*