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Everything Looks Perfect From Far Away

Holly Hunter

Wellington Central Psychiatrist
Evaluation Report
March 17, 1915

Patient: Emily Hutton
Age: 14
Admitted to appointment under concern of her mother, Mrs Claire Hutton.

At first glance, Miss Hutton displays a shockingly pallid complexion, a stunted, unhealthy figure of fragility, and has a most vacant stare. She appears such a haunting portrait of a child possessed, one would shiver in its sight.

I questioned the child on her family and background, solely routine queries. She refused to reply, to all of my prompts. This condition of deathless silence is most commonly, in my field, associated with children whose fathers are away at war.

Am I correct in assuming your husband's absence, Mrs Hutton?

The child's defiant resistance is most probably a heavily exaggerated reaction to Mr Hutton's service in the New Zealand Army's current mission to Turkey. Mrs Hutton, if you continue to allow this immature vow of silence there is no hope for Miss Hutton's improvement before her father's return.

I have presented the young Emily with a small bound journal which, at her leisure, she may write her feelings and thoughts and begin to communicate again.

Yet, altogether appearing a disagreeable and sour child, I recommend brisk daily exercise and a regular diet.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Edmund Atkins

Blogspot: LizzieWillTriumph

My Love for History 6 February, 2010 8.24pm

Today, I enjoyed my History class.

Will that be sufficient, Mr. Davidson? May I return to watching TV now?

As if you'll even check this blog. I bet it's just one of your many ploys or practical jokes, because you're a "hip" teacher, to force your students into writing a blog of their love for History. But Sir, it's you that loves History, not !!

What does "hip" even mean? That your hips are wildly and mutantly out of proportion with your body? I think it's a silly word, one that adults invent for them to be cool. Are you still reading this Mr. Davidson, on your bent-too-far-back laptop

screen? Because I promised I'd complete the homework and luckily for you *I don't lie*.

The task which you so unfairly bombarded me with was to research life in New Zealand during the First World War which, to start with, crushed my hopes of going out to the movies tonight. But your sneaky trick to remove my social life has backfired.

My dear mother rescued me from the depths of homework doom! Down the attic stairs she trod with a small, dark book clasped in her hands and to my aid she came! She told me, yes she did, "This diary belonged to your Great Gran Claire, and from what I recall it's written around the time you're studying in History class. It's been stuffed in a crate up there for years. Most importantly, Lizzie, *don't break the binding.*"

What's that, Mr. Davidson? You call this cheating, abominable cheating? Well, I shall ease this tale of woe to you in segments, that way this project will span over the next five days until the deadline and technically, I will have put an equal amount of effort into this assignment as any other poor, burdened student.

Ready? Let's begin. I opened the book tenderly, as its binding was fragile and I feared to crinkle the pages more than they already were. Before I could even read the first page, a browned piece of paper fluttered to the ground. Its left side had been torn, but from what? The message is as follows:

13 April, 1915

Dad,

Dip, do the poppies under sun's sweet caress
And wave, does the grass in one ethereal sweep.
How base and tainted tastes the soil,
Of blood
Amongst cries of battle;
Rasping in desperation towards sky blue
Salvation, which remains imprisoned; until
His back hits the banks of the
Battlefield.

Love,
E.

Sorry Mr Davidson, but I'm dying to hit the cinema now!
See you in class,
Lizzie

3 Comments

User: Mr D. Feb 7 3.55pm
Very amusing blog, Elizabeth, but I expect to see more topical effort in the future.
Perhaps get in touch with your Great Aunt Claire's children (one of your Grandparents), and find out who this "E" person is?

User: LizzieWillTriumph

Feb 7 4.16pm

Can't. They're all dead, aren't they? I'll go downstairs to see if Mum knows.

User: LizzieWillTriumph

Feb 7 4.19pm

She says "E" stood for Emily, who was my grandpa's half sister. Apparently she died at 14, or something.

18 April, 1915

Mr and Mrs Hutton,

Consider this the final warning you are to receive in response to the currently unpaid rent on your house. The failure to pay rent for the past two months has accumulated an unpaid expense of twenty pounds.

If we do not acquire the required payment from you before the week is over, (Monday, 26 April), your family will be evicted from the building.

Regards,

Mr Graham Boscoe
Landlord

20 April, 1915

Dear Mrs Hutton,

We regret to inform you that your application for the position of Tawa-Flat Primary School nurse has been declined.

Substantial consideration was taken in generating this decision, and let it be known it was not made lightly. Yet under your presently agitated state, we think it best you channel all effort into bettering the mentality of your daughter.

Yours obligingly,

Richard Jones,
Headmaster
Tawa-Flat Primary School

Claire,
21 April, 1915

Have you received the awful letter my husband sent you?

I'm ever so sorry, I told him thrice to reassess the new staffing, but it was to no avail because he'd heard through me that Emily is severely unwell. I feel entirely responsible, as I know how desperately you needed that position.

Please forgive me?

Marge

Blogspot: LizzieWillTriumph 8 February, 2010 7.31pm

My Love for History: The Plot Thickens

Today I am feeling skeptical. No, scratch that, I mean intrigued. Sort of.

I am slightly skeptical and carry inklings of intrigue in *two* areas, to answer your burning question.

Firstly, Mum said she didn't steal the last Crunchie bar from the fridge, but I totally suspect otherwise.

Perhaps more importantly, (at least you wish, don't you Mr Davidson?), I've been a teensy bit haunted by that zombie of a poem which the dead-at-fourteen girl, Emily, wrote to her father. I tried to unravel the reasons behind my being so shaken and came to a concrete cold conclusion: Emily predicted the future.

Her disturbing little letter was dated April 13th, but if I've been paying attention in class, (unlikely, yet plausible), she shouldn't be the slightest bit aware of the death which crept toward those ANZACs as each second was spent. From what I've gathered, the cheerful little New Zealanders of 1914 onwards thought sticking their rifles into World War I to be the snazziest fashion since straw bonnets! That was, at least, before the death toll clocked into town. So how on old-fashioned earth could she have any idea what her father faced at Gallipoli?

A day passed, and I became so curious that I evolved into Tom Cruise in Mission Impossible. Lizzie the Super Spy. I should write myself a theme song. Imagine it playing in the recesses of the following recount:

Ba dada ba dada dum dum

"Facts first," Mr Davidson always told us. I sprinted stealthily to the Wellington City Archives, creeping around crusty corners and sliding between slippery statues.

Ba dada ba dada dum dum

I padded like a thief through the plentitude of files, bookshelves, and folders, searching with my x-ray Super Spy eyes for genealogy.

Ba daaaaa duuuuum

Admittedly I may have asked for help, but that's not relevant to this tale of tension! I traced my finger along the leaves of my family history, eyes darting suspiciously from side to side, searching for shifty looking assassins.

Ba daaaaa duuum

There they are: the dates of death. I recoil into a corner behind an armchair, and scour the page, "Emily Hutton, Emily Hutton, Emily Hutton," I murmur.

Daaah dum

Emily Hutton, born September 22, 1900, died April 26, 1915.

Newspaper cuttings are attached. "Young Girl Missing", "Have You Seen This Child?", "Mother Pleas for Daughter's Return".

I walk home. I open the Great Gran Claire's diary. I flick to the month that is burning into my skull.

24 April, 1915

Dearest Diary,

I am drowning in debts, and as each day grows colder I fear that Emily and I will not survive the winter. Thoughts of Tom are all that keep my heart beating in those bitter and frigid nights, when the wind torments trees outside and Em is huddled in a corner, still despondent.

We've received very few letters from him, but I'm sure he's very busy and undoubtedly isolated on a boat somewhere exotic. Each day the newspapers publish such lovely editorials honouring the courage and competence of our husbands at War, and it reassures me that everything will be all right, that this is just one rough hiccup in the year and when Tom arrives home we can laugh around the dinner table under candlelight. I miss those days more than you, diary, can imagine.

Emily didn't attend school yesterday, to my displeasure. I hear her tossing in the night, and I hear her footsteps on the floorboards when she cannot sleep, but I haven't heard her speak since Tom left in October last year. Doctor Atkins insists it to be immature, but my Em is the most mature girl in her class. She loves to read, although we haven't had quite enough money for books of late, and when she used to speak, it was diction of an adult rather than child's larks.

Strangely, she's become more agitated recently, with odd twitches and such. She went for a walk earlier today, and is yet to return. It seems walking is her only pastime. The sooner Tom gets back from his duties in Turkey, the better we will all feel.

Must go, will write later,

Claire.

1 Comment

User: Mr D

Lizzie, how are you? Your noticeable absence in class today put your friends on edge, not to mention their lack of texts from you.

I agree that this family mystery seems thrilling, but I think it's best we focus on the actual situation of the Army Corps and their eight trying months in Gallipoli.

26 April, 1915

Dear Dad,

It is cold. Are you cold? I'm not. I bet you are cold, because you were ice in my dream.

They will not leave me alone, the dreams.

You were ice in a pool, a red pool. One of your faded eyes reached wider than the other.

I miss you more than Mum, because she still speaks. I can't bear to. Not unless you'll hear me, which you won't, because you're ice.

Celia at school says her Daddy is returning in two months. I told her he won't, because in my dreams many shards are afloat. In that pool. Celia hit me on the cheek.

I'm not cold. My skin is on fire and scorches a passage through the wind. I'm moving.

How can you be ice, and I a flame? I think I want to be ice. Then we can float together.

Promise to meet me in the red pool?

Love,
E.

Blogspot: LizzieWillTriumph

10 February, 2010

My Love For History: The End

"All good things must come to an end."

That's a proverb of some sort, I think. Probably Chinese because every proverb I've ever read had some squiggly little sign as its author. Stupidly, this cliché quote fails to note that the majority of "good things" were never actually good at all.

Take New Zealand society during World War I. Lies buzzed like common, insipid mosquitoes, and the media fed them teasingly to citizens like Claire and her friends so that even horrors like Emily's suicide were covered up. That's right, Mr Davidson, she wasn't abducted, or murdered (unless you call the ghost of her father a murderer).

Newspapers proclaimed patriotism, heroism, lies. While women like my Great Gran Claire fought to pay their bills, manage emotionally conflicted children, earn a wage and feed starving mouths, all they were granted in return were falsities. They didn't know it, but there was a war within their households, their own struggle to survive.

Last night, I reread Claire's diary, sitting out on the deck. Mum brought me a mug of Milo but dropped it in surprise before I could reach it. "Look up there!" she cried, and I glanced up just in time to see the shooting star, in its bruise-green shade, disappear. "Beautiful, isn't it?" she hummed, and walked back inside.

But what she doesn't realise is that it fell down, and down, and down. Sure, it appeared like a sparkling jewel dangling from some celestial mobile, yet up close the star was a raging, violent inferno. It burns, self-destructs, disintegrates. Until it's nothing but a memory.

Here is the last document from the diary. It was ripped half way down.

27 April, 1915

Dear Mrs Hutton,

I deeply regret to say that your husband, Officer Cadet Thomas Hutton, died this evening at 5.46pm. He was brought into the hospital without a leg, not giving the impression of pain, but his death was inevita-

See you in class, Davidson,

Lizzie.

0 Comments

The following document is a series of personal diary entries made by a young New Zealand woman whose husband has been deployed to Egypt and Gallipoli. This woman and her family, friends and memories are fictitious, used only as a means to portray historical evidence and social behaviour at the time of the First World War.

Ryan Loeffen- Gallagher

January 10, 1915

It has been nearly a month since Willie was deployed to Egypt. Yesterday I received my first letter home from him! It was so sweet, he wrote: "In the resounding beauty of the pyramids, and the subtle intimacy of a grain of sand which glistens in the dying sun, I see you, and when I see you, I am home." I think I cried ever so slightly, I wanted to look brave in front of Emily. Which reminds me, I need to find her a birthday present for next week. I wish Willie could be here to see his baby turn five.

In his letter, he referred to the men he was with as Kiwis, I had to laugh, I am supportive of anything which promotes patriotism, but I do think they could have called themselves something more dignifying than a small, flightless bird, I don't care how native it is. Willie says Godley is in charge, which makes me nervous. We had him round for supper a while back, and I got the impression he was a very old-fashioned military man, the sort whom I fear may not cope well in these modern times. I am also wary of the way Godley would talk about how he believes troops should be given minimal supplies, in order to keep them tough and focused on the battle in hand. I know Willie will be missing my roast pork; I think I will cook him a feast fit for a king when he returns. I may even make up some of that apple sauce which he claims is the key to a good roast, but which I think is too sweet.

Willie says there is a lot of talk amongst the men about this battle in Gallipoli. I know that Willie is a fantastic soldier but I still can't push the constant anxiousness. I am more worried for his friends Ian and Riley. The fact that they were unwillingly conscripted worries me; I don't think they will have the right attitude to survive in war. Sally says that her husband Sam has been arrested and imprisoned because he refused to join the war contingency. I feel so bad for the way she is being treated by everyone else as a result; apparently someone etched the word 'shirker' into the side of her brand new car. I must make a note to take a cake over to hers and give her some company.

April 23, 1915

According to Willie's latest letter, their campaign at Gallipoli is supposed to start today. I am ever so nervous. Catherine, Irene and her daughter Patricia have been coming around a lot lately. We like to distract ourselves from the fact that the men we love are staring death in the face over there. Willie says he is holding up well, but he would say that even if he were critically ill; he is so brave, I hate that about him.

I wanted to cook a grand meal for the four of us to celebrate the start of the war, but food prices are so high at the moment I could barely afford extra tea and biscuits. I ran into that poor German family at the store today. They had to leave before they could buy anything because all the customers were cussing at them and insulting Germany's role in the war. I feel sorry for them, but at the same time I suppose they must be treated as the enemy in a way. I am starting to feel as if this war will not be ending any time soon, the government used to talk about the end of the war as if it were nearing, but I have noticed that such talk has since been replaced by warnings and patriotic slogans.

All I can do now is sit and wait to hear of news from Europe.

And pray.

I miss him so much.

December 25, 1915, Christmas Day

It's Christmas, and I just received the best present I could have hoped for, news that Willie has survived. He made it. I should be happy. I should be relieved. I am neither. I am only scared. According to the newspaper, more than 2500 New Zealand men have died. Catherine's husband was one of them, and she followed a week later, courtesy of a noose in the hay barn.

This is the coldest Christmas I have ever experienced, even though it is 28 degrees outside. I cannot walk outside because I see death lingering on the face of everyone. The government is trying to emphasise the bravery and pride of the ANZACS, but that won't bring home 2500 or so 'Kiwi' boys.

I told Emily that daddy was coming home, to which she replied: 'Will he be bringing presents?' Children.

January 3, 1919

How can faith exist in an environment whereby pain and grief are the monarchs of our lives? King and Queen, they rule over everything we do and make sure no man goes untouched by them.

Willie is alive, and home, but Emily is lying next to Granddad in the cemetery, 6 feet underground. The war has finished, yet the suffering has not. A more cruel and unforgiving force has invaded New Zealand: Influenza. Nearly 9000 are dead, and my precious baby girl is one of them. We didn't see it coming, one day she was healthy, and throwing a tennis ball in the garden with her father, then suddenly the lord decided that she had lived long enough on earth. She was eight. Patricia, Irene's daughter, fell to the pandemic also. I feel like I have so much I want to say, I want to rant, and kick and scream and cry, but each time I put my pen to paper, I merely freeze. No words could describe the way I feel. Cheated, Drained, Guilty, Dissolved. I feel all of these, and yet I feel none of these.

The world is in ruins. I cannot see another war like this happening for many many years, not in this century anyway. I am proud that my husband was a part of such a noble effort, but now I have years of high prices, economic rebuilding and consoling to look forward to. I have realised that this 'journal' is not helping me anymore; it is just cementing the pain within these pages. However, if Willie and I are to get through this, it is better that the pain is transferred elsewhere, even for a little while.

All I can do now is pray.

I miss her so much.

Alana Stretton

My Great Grandfather, Harry Tosland (Reg.no 11/1237) was a Trooper in the Wellington Mounted rifles. He was posted to Gallipoli in October 1915 and stayed there until the evacuation in December 1915.

I have written extracts of a diary from the perspective of Elizabeth Sutherland, a wife whose husband Jack was a soldier in a regiment that were amongst the first to land on the beaches of Gallipoli on 25th April 1915. The diary entries outline the lives of a farming family Taranaki in 1915 and the impact the war and loss of family members had on them. All the family members are fictitious, but I have based some of the events in stories that I have heard passed down by my grandparents, as well as researching in the library.

28 April 1915

I am not sure that I can even bring myself to write in this diary today. The shock and horror of yesterday is still fresh in our minds. It all still seems such a blur and somehow surreal and as much as we always knew this day could come - somehow the reality of it actually happening is no less shocking than if it was totally unexpected

The dreaded telegram was delivered from the War Office and Pa could barely bring himself to open it. I held my breath willing it not to be Jack and could not help myself letting out a sigh of relief when Pa said "Oh my God, it's Arthur".

Ma had to be helped to a chair and I quickly got some brandy to calm her. I was torn between despair for dear sweet Arthur and the sheer relief that it wasn't my beloved Jack.

The rest of the day passed in a blur as word got around about Arthur. Ma took to her bed and has not risen since. Pa has been wandering aimlessly, feeling helpless and unable to find any answers as we have only the sketchiest of details of what happened to Arthur, other than he was in France where there have been heavy losses.

The worst thing is that Arthur died over eight weeks ago - 8 weeks when we have been living as close to normal lives as we can and all this time dear Arthur was already dead.

2 May 1915

Frances and the children arrived today. Pa picked them up from the station and brought them home. I had always thought Frances to be rather aloof like she was destined for better things - not a mundane life on the farm. I always felt that Arthur was foolish turning his back on the farm and heading off to the city because Frances thought it was best for her and the children. But enough of that; she and the children need our support now more than ever and I shall try and help her through this as best I can.

Frances has lost her self assurance and is bereft at the thought of going on without Arthur. It is still too soon for her to be making any decision, but Pa thinks she should

stay and get a job teaching at the local school. Joe and Lily are old enough to know what has happened; there is sadness and tears, but they seem to be coping a bit better - after all children seem to be more resilient and after not seeing their father for 9 months, they have got used to life without him.

5 May 1915

Father Gray has been here every day offering comfort to both Ma and Frances. We are going to have a memorial service for Arthur on Sunday and hopefully that will help everyone come to terms with this all. It is just so hard knowing that Arthur has been buried on the other side of the world and his loved ones are unable to pay their respects or visit and tend to his grave. Harry is taking it all very badly and is grieving with anger. He's normally a cheerful and easygoing lad, but losing his older brother has triggered an emotion we have never seen before. He seems to want to lash out and make someone pay for doing this. He needs to work through this in his own time; Father Gray is persevering but Harry is not ready to listen to anything he has to say. I feel his faith has been truly tested.

8 May 1915

It took a great effort to rouse ourselves from our despair and get ourselves dressed in our Sunday best and attend the service today. Joe and Lily were determined to go, but I left the other children at home with Mrs Jones who kindly came over with yet another casserole. Father Gray took a lovely service, although most of it passed by in a blur. Ma and Frances clung on to each other and Pa sat next to them with his head hung low. No parent should have to be farewelling their child like this. There was a great turnout from the neighbours – it's times like this that make you realise that everyone in the district looks out for each other. We have certainly been to several of these services ourselves over the past few months.

15 May 1915

We have decided not to tell Jack about Arthur. It would be devastating for him to hear that he has lost his older brother. He has always been very close to Arthur and always looked up to him. We need Jack to stay focussed and as positive as possible so that he will not also succumb to this dreadful war. It is going to make writing letters to Jack very difficult, as we will need to think about everything first before we write.

Losing another son would be unbearable for Ma & Pa, and I can not even imagine trying to go on without my beloved Jack. I will write to Jack tonight as it makes me feel close to him and gives me comfort. He tells me that receiving our letters gives him the strength to go on; so I must try and write every few days. We never know how long it takes for our letters to reach him - if at all!

26 May 1915

Frances is determined to pick herself up for the sake of the children and said she must start to pull her weight around the farm. She has offered to help Harry with the milking - if everything wasn't so tragic I could almost see the funny side. Being a city girl, I did not think she even knew where the milk came from. But good on her, Harry could certainly do with some help now that Pa is only managing to scrape the yard

after the milking. We must help Frances all we can to pick up the pieces and try and move forward with her life. Harry has found her some old overalls and she will have her first milking lesson tomorrow. Lily, bless her, has offered to help mind the little ones - she is a sweet girl and definitely has a way with the younger ones. Alice and William adore her and are always following her around the house, Most afternoons I see her reading to James in the nursery, and Alice and William are always close by, usually snuggled up next to her on the settee. She has proved to be a great help around the house, always eager to please and never complaining. It doesn't seem right that an 11 year old is having to take on so much responsibility instead of enjoying the carefree days of childhood. This war is doing that to all of us - forcing us to take on roles that were unheard of before.

I shall take advantage of a few extra hours while Lily is minding the children to tackle the housework that has been slipping behind Ma has become quite frail and has taken to spending the afternoons resting in her room.

5 June 1915

At last today, a letter from Jack - the first in over 2 months. My first thought was thank God he is safe, but then I realised that it was dated over 6 weeks ago. He has written while onboard a troopship heading towards the Dardanelles. I have been bouncing between elation and despair all day; I have reread Jack's letter over and over. We have been following the progress of the war in the newspaper and Pa listens to the wireless every night. The casualties where my beloved Jack are have been huge and I shudder to think of what he has been going through and the shocking sights he will have seen. I can only imagine the extreme living conditions and the food they are eating. I only hope and pray that he is still alive. I get so angry sometimes - this does not even seem to be our war, although both Jack and Arthur felt very different about their loyalty to 'King and Country.' They did not even have to go off to this war with married men being exempt from having to sign up, but both felt that it was their duty to fight for their county. There are plenty of other married men in the district that haven't felt the same need to be a part of this war half a world away. Their families are so fortunate to be intact and not have this constant dread every morning when they wake up with the first thought that maybe today is the day when that fateful telegram may be delivered.

13 June 1915

Next week is William's birthday and he will be going off to school. He's very excited to think that he will be a 'big boy' and then asked me if Father was going to come home for his birthday. I tried not to let him see my tears - I told him that even if Father wasn't here, he would certainly be sending him a birthday wish from the war. William thinks that where the war is sounds like a great place as he sees James and his friends always playing their war games and shooting each other. It's their favourite pastime and as hard as I find it to see, I don't have the heart to stop it although I always try and keep them away from Frances. James is always boasting to his friends about his Father at the war and how many of the enemy he has shot. Most of their Fathers 'are also away at war as well and it seems like they just want to compete against each other. If only they could see that this war is nothing like a game. I tried to get Pa to stop them, but he just said that 'boys will be boys' and that's how they see the war.

24 June 1915

Another cruel blow today. Frances rushed back from the cowshed this morning with a note in her hand - the un milked cows forgotten. Harry has decided to join the army and left late last night. Ma almost collapsed on the spot Harry said in his note that he needed to do this; that it was his duty to fight for his country. Dear God, he is only sixteen, Pa is going into town this morning to see what can be done as the army should not even be taking underage lads.

Pa returned from town very downcast and looking like he had aged 10 years. Apparently Harry did not go to the local army office, and they think he has probably headed south on the train. Ernie Jones's boy has gone as well. No doubt Harry will lie about his age, he certainly looks older, and the army will turn a blind eye even if they suspect, as they are desperate for more soldiers. Ma is inconsolable; it's like she is already grieving for her youngest son.

28 June 1915

Joe has seemingly grown up overnight. He is a strapping lad and seems to feel he needs to step into Harry's shoes. For a lad of 14, he is surprisingly mature and is taking his new role of working the farm very seriously. He is a dab hand at milking; he seems to have a soft touch for the animals and is always busy doing chores around the farm. All that wood chopping seems to have made him so strong and muscular. It seems such a huge burden for the young lad, but I thank God he is here as I don't know how we would manage without him. I told him over breakfast that Arthur would be very proud of him and I could see he was pleased by what I said, but it brought a few tears from Frances. Joe said he loves working with the animals and I thought to myself what a strange way things have of coming about, as had his Father not been killed he would still be living in the city.

9 July 1915

Elsie Findlay and Gladys Taylor arrived this afternoon to ask if I would join the group of women forming the Hawera Patriotic Association. They intend to organise small groups of women not in paid employment to knit or stitch items of clothing for soldiers. I was instantly indignant when they suggested that I did not work - who did they think oversees the running of the farm? I work every hour that God gives us, but it is still not enough to get everything done. Elsie still has her husband home and Gladys lives in town, so of course they have more time to organise these good causes.

But luckily I kept my emotions in check as they went on to say that they wanted to provide the comforts that soldiers needed in their kit bags: two pairs each of socks and underpants; two each of woollen shirts and undershirts, towels and cholera belts, and one handkerchief, chest protector, pair of braces, holdall, balaclava cap, service bag for rations, and a housewife. I thought what a peculiar thing to call a darning kit a housewife! These items would be sent to soldiers serving in Gallipoli, France and Belgium. My heart caught in my mouth when Elsie mentioned Gallipoli as it would be like I was doing something especially for my Jack. I immediately chastised myself for only thinking of myself and my unkind thoughts towards these two women who really want to help soldiers like Jack.

Frances could see my discomfort and smoothed over the awkward moment by saying that of course we would be happy to help and she would even teach Lily to knit as well.

This horrid war seems to bring out the best and the worst of us all at the same time.

15 July 1915

Joe announced this morning that he would start taking the milk to the factory. This took me by surprise as it is something I had done since Jack left. Not that I would mind, as I sometimes have trouble with the cart and Laddie not behaving as a horse should. The two hours that it usually took me to load the heavy milk cans and transport them to the factory would be well used elsewhere. I will use the time to tend to the vegetable garden that Harry started and shall try and get the children interested as well. I fear that if this war isn't over soon we will start to see food shortages and we want to be well prepared if needed. I worried needlessly when Joe first left that first morning, but he seemed confident and was back again in what seemed like no time at all.

19 July 1915

The first of the early calves arrived today. We baled the young heifer up in the shed; it was a difficult birth but thank God that Joe was there to help I doubt that he has ever seen a calf born before, let alone helped with the actual calving. Unfortunately the calf was a bull and I shall have to explain to Joe that we can not keep it. I did not have the heart to tell him how the unwanted calves are disposed of, let alone expect him to be the one to knock the poor wee thing on the head and skin it before burying it. I think I shall ask Ernie Jones to come over and deal with it for us.

21 July 1915

Oh how I wish that Jack were here - these sorts of things would never have happened if he was. He would have seen that the boundary fence needed repairing and would never have put the young heifers in that paddock close to where Ernie Jones keeps his bull. I do my best, but I don't think farming is meant for women. I can deal with any disaster or decision in the house or to do with the children, but trying to run the farm requires a great deal of physical and mental strength that I am not sure I possess. I just hope and pray that this horrid war will be over soon and our men can come home safe.

31 July 1915

Still no word from Harry. Pa tries not to show his worry in front of Ma, but I know he is fearing the worst. He reads the paper every day and listens to the broadcasts on the wireless every night. The papers are full of the war and every day brings more worrying news of losses and despair.

10 August 1915

Next week it will be one year since the outbreak of war. It feels like 10 years since Jack was here and our once normal life seems like a distant memory - so much has happened. There is going to be a 'Patriotic Carnival' in Hawera to commemorate the

anniversary. Personally, I think it very strange to call it a carnival as that usually suggests a happy occasion. How can we be celebrating and happy when we, and so many others have suffered such great losses. However, I think we should make the effort to go; it will do us all a lot of good to take a break from the farm.

17 August 1915

We all rushed through our chores this morning and then dressed in our Sunday best before heading off to town. Even Ma & Pa came as well. I am sure the whole district was there for the occasion as the streets were lined three deep in places. The children all waved their fags and the cheered as the band came through followed by the floats. It was a grand occasion and it was easy to overlook why we were there. For a few hours we were able to forget about the horrors of the war, even though remembering it was why we were there. While we were in town we visited Jack's cousin Marjorie and her husband Charles for afternoon tea. Charles had been declared medically unfit for war service and as they only had the two girls. I thought the war was not really affecting them the same. But Marjorie pointed out that it was very difficult with Jean being eighteen and at a stage where she should be thinking about marrying - there were so few young men left in the district. And who knew how many would return maimed or even return at all? Marjorie said they have even cancelled the dance next Saturday as there just weren't enough men to make it worthwhile. She asked what is the point of getting all dressed up and having nobody to dance with? I think she would not be worrying about this so much if she had Charles or a son away at the war.

23 August 1915

Finally, when we had almost given up hope - a postcard from Harry! His regiment has joined the troops in Gallipoli. Ma wept with both relief and despair at the thought of her youngest son facing the gruesome reality of war. I took some comfort at the thought that he was near Jack, as if they could somehow be looking out for each other. The news from Gallipoli has not been good, with heavy losses being reported in the newspapers. I thank God that we have finally heard from Harry and can only pray that both he and Jack will stay safe. Please God, let me hear from Jack soon, so that I know he too is safe.

29 August 1915

More of the local men and lads have been joining up with the army recently. The newspaper editorials have been urging all able bodied men to do the right thing and serve their country, and to accept the necessity of greater sacrifices if the war is to be won. After the heavy losses, the army is desperate for more soldiers. The mood in the district has become somewhat darker and it is not uncommon to hear of young men being singled out and criticised for not stepping forward to do their duty. Having lived through what we have over the past 12 months, I would do whatever it takes to try and prevent any more of my family falling victim to this dreadful war. I can only hope that it is all over before Joe is much older as I cannot bear the thought of losing him any more than my own boys. We hope and pray every day that it is all over soon and both Jack and Harry can come home safely to us.

3 September 1915

Relief and elation today - another letter from Jack. His letters are taking even longer to arrive - this one written 4 months ago. But even knowing that so much has happened at Gallipoli since he wrote this can't stop that feeling of excitement when a letter arrives. I can only hope and pray that he is still safe. We have read so much in the newspapers - the situation seems far worse than we first believed and the loss of life there has been enormous. He sounds as though he is bearing up, although their living conditions sound dreadful. I know how much Jack loves his meat and vegetables; he will be finding it very difficult living on the food he mentions. I would love nothing more than to be putting a roast in the oven for his dinner tonight.

James was very excited to hear that we had a letter from his Father, sometimes I forget how much it affects the children with their father not here. William, who doesn't really have any understanding of the war at all, asked if his father was dead the same as Billy's was. It breaks my heart to try and explain to them that their father is away fighting in the war, but that he is safe - especially when I have trouble convincing myself that he is. Surely I would feel it if he were not I must stay positive and optimistic for my own sake as well as the childrens'.

As time goes by more people in the district are hearing that their loved ones will not be coming home. Other men have come home wounded and maimed to the point that they will carry the scars for the rest of their lives. The reality of the war is hitting home and some of the younger lads are seeing first hand the results of war, and that it is not the exciting adventure they first thought. Please God, let it be over soon.