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## OUR BIT

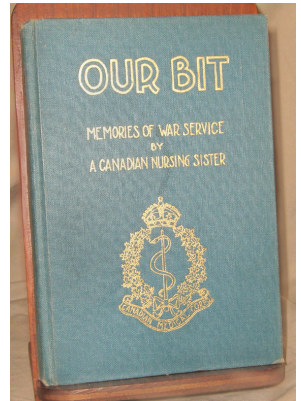
(Memories of War Service by A Canadian Nursing - Sister.)

**Mabel B. Clint**

**CA0299**

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## ABOUT THIS CD.

Sub title: "Memories of War Service by A Canadian Nursing-Sister."

Accounts of the exploits and experiences from the Great War usually emanate from front-line troops of fighting units. But here is the story of a Canadian Nursing-Sister, supporting and supplying aid to these "front-liners" when the need arose, as it did to so many. Not only then is this a Great War story from a new perspective but also one from the minority of "fighting females" doing their bit for King and Country.

Written by Mabel B. Clint as a record of her experiences with the Canadian nursing staff, Mabel's account manages to include the big picture without losing the personal touch of her individual experiences while doing "her bit." Her service took her to both the Western and the Eastern fronts and after she was rotated back to England she applied for, and received, a second tour of duty at the Western Front.

Mabel sacrifices the intimacy of a truly personal account so that she can speak of the strategic progress of the war as she describes the part she plays in it. Her experiences at the Eastern Front leave little to the imagination in terms of her feelings about the lack of adequate management or facilities. On the other hand she is able to capture the mood of the whole of England when the news of Navy losses during the battle of Jutland broke during her brief visit to London.

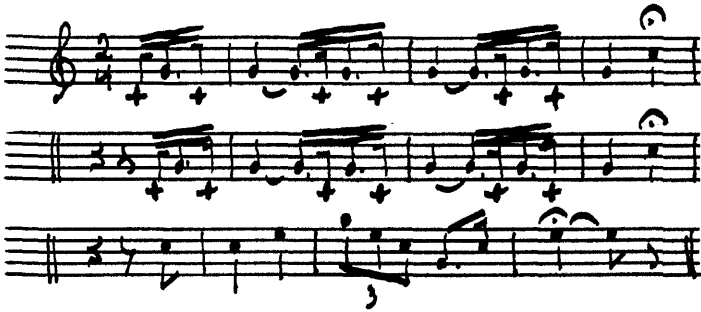
A rare insight into the life and experience of a nursing-sister serving through the whole duration of the Great War.

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# OUR BIT

Memories of War Service  
by  
A Canadian Nursing-Sister

*M. B. Clint, A.R.R.C.,*



Price \$1.25

BARWICK LIMITED - PRINTERS  
MONTREAL

## C O N T E N T S

- I 1914. Mobilization; Quebec; The Fleet, Gaspé Bay.
- II The Voyage; The Armada Plymouth.
- III London at War; St. Thomas' Hospital.
- IV The Channel; Le Touquet, France. (First Canadian Hospital)
- V 1915. A French Emergency Hospital.
- VI A Hospital under Canvas, Wimereux.
- VII 1915. To the East: Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.
- VIII The Advanced Base, Island of Lemnos.
- IX End of a Great Adventure; Evacuation.
- X 1916. Cairo in those Years.
- XI One Black Week; Jutland; Kitchener.
- XII 1917. Buxton in a Dark Hour.
- XIII At the King's Command.
- XIV 1918. Boulogne and Air-raids.
- XV Leave on the French Réviéra.
- XVI 1918. "Back to Mons."
- XVII The Battlefields after the Armistice.
- XVIII Christmas in Wards. Grateful Patients.
- XIX 1919. The Funeral of Edith Cavell.
- XX Farewell March of the Empire Troops.

## IV

### ACROSS THE CHANNEL. FIRST CANADIAN HOSPITAL IN FRANCE.

At last we were really on the way, envied of all left behind. At Southampton we were taken for a motor drive of several hours, through beautiful Hampshire, studded with military camps, no payment being accepted, because we were Canadians, and on the 7th November, boarded the hospital ship Carisbrooke Castle, which had just discharged 600 wounded. There was no sleep for anyone that night, as the boat coaled by the wharf, supplies were being taken on, chains rattling, orders relayed, and thud of heavy boxes overhead. It was a grimy group that met at breakfast. The hospital wards were already prepared for the next convoy, six medical officers and twelve Sisters being the complement for sometimes eight hundred wounded, ably assisted by trained orderlies. Every department was comfortable, clean and well-equipped. Steaming down Southampton Water we got a first glimpse of the human and material war resources that were daily being rushed to the invaded countries. It was foggy at first, and our progress was slow, many ships going both ways appearing out of the mist close beside us, while whistles blew and bells clamoured. Many troopships crowded with reinforcements singing "Tipperary" had the right of way, and we met a great fleet of empty ones returning to port. The defences of Portsmouth, or such as we could see of them, were a formidable array, and many destroyers clustered round the Channel entrance. It seemed like a page of past history to see guns mounted at strategic points high up on the cliffs, and clusters of white tents at frequent intervals. All during a calm Sunday afternoon, warm and sunny as June, we were steaming past Beachy Head and the white coast to Folkestone, where we turned south. As night fell weird arcs of light swept across the sky from the searchlights at Dover and Cap Gris-Nez, and occasionally blazed and died on one of the destroyer patrol, or a trawler "fishing" for enemy mines. It was very suggestive of danger and destruction so few miles east along

## VI

### A HOSPITAL UNDER CANVAS. WIMEREUX.

In May several of us were transferred to No. 1 Stationary Hospital, which had been established for a month or two in tents on the cliffs near the village of Wimereux, on the eastern outskirts of Boulogne. A gale blew up on the night of our arrival, and we expected to see our marquee ripped from overhead every moment. Straining of ropes and flapping of canvas made a noisier combination than anything ever experienced at sea. There was a great hammering of pegs all next morning. The rows of tents paralleled the railway, about 200 yards away, and as great movements of French troops to another sector, and of British to replace them up the line were going on night and day, troop-trains never ceased one hour. At night we could tell if a hospital train was passing, from its slower motion, and if it came round the curve at ordinary speed, we knew more reinforcements were going up to hold the battered outposts at Ypres, or to dig themselves in among the ruins of some other skeleton town.

Our patients were seldom serious cases, as these went to the numerous adjacent buildings, taken over by the R.A.M.C. But in the constant fighting round the Salient that June, new battalions got their baptism of fire very quickly, and it sometimes happened that a lad who had passed our camp on a train the day before, returned wounded in forty-eight hours. We were in the midst of fields, and all about us the grass was blood-red with thickly-growing poppies. It was often remarked by the French that never before had they known them in such profusion. The "boys" used to love to lie among them, after their dressings were done, and on arrival after a long spell of the hideous front line trenches, the English lads especially longed for a touch of peace and beauty. It was fitting that the contrast, and yet sinister likeness of the scarlet meadows should inspire perhaps the best-known verses of the entire war, those of our Canadian soldier-poet Lt. Colonel John McCrae, M.D. He had

## VIII

### THE ISLAND OF LEMNOS. ADVANCED BASE.

The complete history of the Dardanelles' campaign has never been written, nor is it likely to be published now. The comparatively minor fact that the steamer River Clyde was not retained as a national memorial, like relics of the *Vindictive*, seemed to indicate an intention that the tragic landing on the Peninsula were best forgotten. The Mesopotamia débacle received much more publicity and attention, and maladministration was brought to light. Everyone now seems to have realized that the assault on Gallipoli was a brilliant scheme, but a stupendous task to which, when once decided upon, strong support and co-ordination of the navy and army were indispensable.

But of the conditions prevailing on the Islands of Imbros and Lemnos, and indeed in hospitals and camps in Egypt, the public knows nothing. The whole operations continued to be a bone of contention between the fighting services, and the politicians, and to be treated apparently as a side issue. In spite of untold gallantry therefore of the men who bore the results of divided counsels, it was doomed by a series of preventable blunders. We were given an account of the break down, or rather non-existence of hospital services from many quarters, and the few mentioned here might be greatly multiplied. It was said that after the first attack by the 29th Division on April 25th, only two ships were available to take the wounded to Alexandria, 800 miles away, and one had no medical supplies aboard! Small vessels and rafts landed others on the beach at East Mudros, one of the Lemnian villages, where they died as they lay, without attention except a belated burial. I have seen their graves on that tragic spot. One hundred doctors from Canada and elsewhere had been assembled in August for an expected casualty list. But they were kept inactive on ships at Imbros, while the stream of war wastage was carried past them twenty-five miles back to Lemnos. Then they followed, were redistributed, and eventually



## XII

### 1917. BUXTON IN A DARK HOUR.

A brief sojourn at No. 16 Canadian General Hospital (Ontario) Orpington, Kent, specially planned for its task, and pleasantly situated to provide sun, air and quiet surroundings for convalescing patients, offset the nightmare of Lemnos. Enemy airships passed over us several times, but did not waste any bombs intended for London.

Thence to beautiful Buxton, whose Spa hotels and many dwellings were filled with 5000 Canadian soldiers, awaiting transport home. The remnants of the first year of the war were there, many amputation cases, and permanently unfit. A hydro and massage therapy had been established, and the town was for the time being a Canadian resort. Here was entire and healthful change of scene to all. The high moors, all roads leading to the "Cat and the Fiddle", the highest Inn for situation in England (1700 ft.), and alternating valleys forming the most picturesque district of inland England. In Buxton, if one is not climbing a hill, one is descending, and the men were lodged in five or six storey hotels. It was inevitable that the amputations should be lodged on the top floor, and the finger injuries on street level!

There were comparatively few bed patients, but it was necessary to see and follow up one's 150 men daily, as they had become so "fed up" with the monotony, the fear of disablement for life, and especially hope deferred as to return to Canada, a general mental malaise. It required considerable effort to keep them cheerful. The Sisters were responsible for seeing that they attended their various clinics punctually, had books and games in adequate quantity, and took outdoor exercise. Minor dressings and illnesses required daily attention, but there was no trying nursing strain, though living on ladders so to speak, countless steps mounted per diem, was very fatiguing.

## BRITISH ARMIES' NURSING SERVICES.

August, 1914. Within three weeks of the declaration of war there were 516 'Imperial' nurses in France.

	Enrolled.	Casualties. by enemy action.	
Great Britain	23,673	302	45
Canada	2,854	49	21
Australia	2,045	14	
New Zealand	579	15	10
South Africa	382	9	
Newfoundland	43	1	
Canadian Nurses serving with Q.A.I.M.N.S. numbered	228		
Australian and New Zealand	"	"	131
		1914	1918
Q.A.I.M.N.S. and Reserve totalled . . . . .	463	13,124	
Territorial Force: . . . . .		9,236	

At Armistice 5650 British nurses on lines of communication.

Enrolled in St. John's Ambulance Brigade and British Red Cross: 82,857.

Total Casualties 389, commemorated on Screen in York Minster. Canadian Nurses' Memorial, Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

Canadian Volunteers: 22 Nurses served 6 months at La Panne, Belgium. 4 C.A.M.C. Sisters attached to staff of Anglo-Russian Hospital in Russia. 1915-17 Canadian V.A.D. nurses (St. John's Ambulance) 342. Cas. 1. R.R.C. 1.

## DECORATIONS

	R.R.C.	M.M.	
Great Britain			
Canada	317	8	(Bravery in bombed hospitals at Etaples and Doullens.)
	(Bar) 4		
Australia	147	7	
New Zealand	76		
South Africa	10		
Newfoundland	5		

The interest and cooperation of the Alumnae Association of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, and of subscribers here and elsewhere in Canada, have made this edition possible, and to them I desire to express my sincere appreciation.

The narrative, inadequate as I feel it to be, is as yet the only effort made in book form to fill a gap in the published record in Canada of various phases of the Great War . . . the essential and honourable part played by the nursing services throughout the greatest convulsion in history. Canadians should know something of this chapter of the story also, and remember it. An attempt has been made to convey a general picture of scenes of the war as nurses saw it, living and working behind the lines, the only phase which has remained unnoticed during the years since, and to recapture something of the atmosphere of those days, which will I believe appeal to all who were "over there", even though it comprises only *some* experiences of *some* nurses. Others had thrilling personal adventures, but an eyewitness account must be necessarily incomplete.

"We who have seen men broken" are also proud to pay a tribute to the British forces, of land and sea and air, from the seven seas, and four quarters of the globe, who were our defenders, and some of whom we were privileged to aid. M.C.

March 1934.

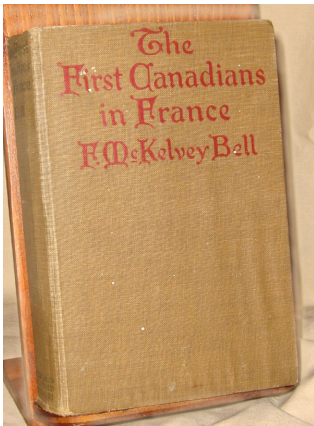


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# The First Canadians in France

## F. McKelvey Bell

### CA0294



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## **ABOUT THIS CD.**

The Chronicle of a Military Hospital in the war zone.

Let us be clear from the outset, this is a work of fiction. But this allows the book to tell the story of a doctor serving in the Canadian military in a way which more clearly illustrates the experience than any purely factual work. Let us also be clear however that, though this is a work of fiction, it is firmly based in fact. In the words the author chose for his preface:

"The pill of fact herein is but thinly coated with the sugar of fiction but if the reader can get a picture, however indefinite, of military hospital life in France, these pages will not have been written altogether in vain."

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"HE IS A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART!" EXCLAIMED MADAME  
COUILLARD

# THE FIRST CANADIANS IN FRANCE

THE CHRONICLE OF A MILITARY  
HOSPITAL IN THE WAR ZONE

BY

F. McKELVEY BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY  
CHRISTOPHER FULLEYLOVE

McCLELLAND, GOODCHILD & STEWART  
PUBLISHERS :: :: :: :: :: TORONTO

## PREFACE

IN glancing through these pages, now that they are written, I realise that insufficient stress has been laid upon the heroism and self-sacrifice of the non-commissioned officers and men of the Army Medical Corps—the boys who, in the dull monotony of hospital life, denied the exhilaration and stimulus of the firing line, are, alas, too often forgotten. All honour to them that in spite of this handicap they give of their best, and give it whole-heartedly to their stricken comrades.

The pill of fact herein is but thinly coated with the sugar of fiction, but if the reader can get a picture, however indefinite, of military hospital life in France, these pages will not have been written altogether in vain.

F. McK. B.



# THE FIRST CANADIANS IN FRANCE

## CHAPTER I

WE were a heterogeneous lot—no one could deny that—all the way down from big Bill Barker, the heavyweight hostler, to little Huxford, the featherweight hustler.

No commanding officer, while sober, would have chosen us *en masse*. But we weren't chosen—we just arrived, piece by piece; and the Hammer of Time, with many a nasty knock, has welded us.

One by one, from the farthest corners of the Dominion, the magic magnet of the war drew us to the plains of Valcartier, and one by one it dropped us side by side. Why some came or why they are still here God knows! Man may merely conjecture.

Divers forces helped to speed us from our homes: love of adventure, loss of a sweetheart, family quarrels, the wander-spirit, and, among

## CHAPTER IV

DURING the day and a half that we stood out in the Channel fog, wondering whether we should ever reach land, or whether a stray German submarine would send us to a higher sphere, we had plenty of time to look about the ship. She was an India liner which had been pressed into service as a troop ship; and the Hindu stewards looked after our many wants as only the Oriental can.

What a far-reaching cosmopolitanism emanates from that little land of Britain! Here were English officers giving orders to the Hindus in their own mysterious tongue; and the deference with which these men obeyed helped us to realise Britain's greatness. To conquer a country, tame it, civilise it—sometimes by force—and still retain the love and respect of its inhabitants, is a power given to but few peoples; yet Britons possess it to the full.

## CHAPTER VIII

At last the time for action had come. Three hundred wounded would arrive in two hours; one-fifth the number would throw the average city hospital into confusion. Nurses and officers hurried from their villas to the hospital. The cooks and orderlies were already on duty, and the hospital presented a scene of bustling but systematic activity.

Our ten wards, each named after a province of our beloved Dominion, were soon ready for the reception of patients, and the deft hands of the nursing sisters added the final touch of extra preparation.

The colonel's motor car throbbed in waiting at the door, and ambulance after ambulance, with its quota of stretcher-bearers, whirled away into the darkness of the forest on the road to the station. It was a clear, cold night. The ground was hardened by the frost, and the pale quarter-moon cast a faint chill light over the trees.

## CHAPTER XIII

THE colonel's seven-passenger *Berliet* was chug-chugging softly at the villa door, the drowsy hum of the exhaust hinting of concealed power and speed. The colonel, Reggy, Jack Wellcombe and I were about to commence our long-looked-for trip to that battered corner of Belgium which still remained in British hands.

Tim was standing at the door with his master's "British warm" thrown across his arm, waiting for the colonel to come out. It was a clear cold February morning, the air had in it just the faintest hint of frost, but not a breath of wind stirred the green foliage of the pines. Lady Danby's runabout stood across the road, and from beneath it peeped a pair of trim limbs encased in thick woollen stockings and ending in a pair of lady's heavy walking boots; telling Tim that her ladyship's dainty "chauffeur" was somewhere there below.

The "lady-chauffeur" was one of that eccen-

eral messenger, travelled into Boulogne and back from once to thrice daily—in other words, inside the year he accomplished a motor trip of sufficient length to encompass the earth. His stock of rumours was inexhaustible, for he developed and launched upon an unappreciative world at least one new tale daily.

Now if there is one thing a soldier loves more than another it's a "rumour"; and the more glaringly absurd, the more readily he will listen to it. So when the worthy old sergeant burst into the hospital with excited eyes, flushed cheeks and cap all awry after his latest trip from Boulogne, the boys crowded round to hear the news.

"They're here! By gosh! They're here at last!" he shouted, as he deposited his overflowing mail bag in the hall and looked triumphantly from one to another of his listeners.

"Who's here," demanded Barker, "the Germans?"

"Germans be blowed!" declared the sergeant with scornful emphasis. "They won't never be here!"

"Put a little pep in it, dad!" said Huxford. "Wot is it?"

## CHAPTER XVIII

As the sun hid its face on that tragic evening of the twenty-second of April, 1915, the Turcos and Canadians, peering over their parapets, were astonished to see a heavy yellowish mist rolling slowly and ominously from the German trenches. In the light breeze of sundown it floated lazily toward them, clinging close to the earth. Although the Turcos thought it a peculiar fog, they did not realise its true significance until it rolled into their trenches and enveloped them in its blinding fumes, stinging their eyes, choking their lungs and making them deathly ill. They could neither see nor breathe and those who could not get away fell in heaps where they were, gasping for air, blue in the face, dying in the most frightful agony.

Germany, discarding the last tattered remnant of her mantle of honour, had plunged brazenly into a hideous crime—poison-gas had been used for the first time in the history of war!