

Everything *felt* the same; just another day in 1915 with my stiff collared pristine blouse that never softened with time, my unsightly pinafore which was always unavoidably scuffed around my ankles and my tight ebony shined shoes still pinched my toes, however today was considerably different. As a creature of habit it was difficult for me not to stroll calmly towards York Place, no, instead I walked the rather more lengthy route towards Clarence Gate. Of course the journey was not without excitement as I simply could not wait to see the beautiful new Francis Holland school and also show off my new style of braided hair to my best friend Casey.

After suddenly noticing my little sister beginning to tire, I clasped her hand tightly to stop her squirming away; she really could be quite horridly annoying sometimes. As it was her first day at secondary school her nervousness was understandable however I know how disagreeable she can become if spoiled, "hush Rebecca, you must be good for us today or I will tell Mama!". That quietened her somewhat although I am sure our older sibling Mary Rose would be much more persuasive, she was *head girl* after all.

Being so engrossed in keeping Rebecca under control I failed to notice that we had approached the glossy black gates. I had never seen a building so divine- an architectural masterpiece! I could feel Becky peering at the school from out behind my skirt. I dragged the unruly child through the gates, still gazing in awe. Miss Stephenson, the headmistress stood at the side of the vast oak doors smiled proudly next to her glorious creation shaking hands with entering students. As I walked up to her smiles warmly and gripped the hands of my sister and I in turn, such strength and confidence! Oh how I admired her!

As all girls piled into the new school two girls from each form went to dust their Form rooms before everybody else arrived, what an honour that was, it must have been Casey that day as I had not caught sight of my blonde friend. It seems the war had only made Francis Holland School stronger. Despite all the fear, there was something thrilling about helping one's country, even it was only knitting socks or rolling bandages.

The most detestable thing about the war was the dreaded food rationing. Notices have started to appear everywhere advertising meat substitutes and strange gritty substances in the place of bread. Believe it or not but there have been bans on butter, bacon, marmalade, cheese *and* margarine, I don't know how I shall survive a day longer. No marmalade! Mama said she missed cheese the most but I never liked it anyway. Mama made (the newly hideous) maize scones, oat cakes and gingerbread all without flour, fat, eggs *or* sugar. I honestly don't know how we managed!

Daylight raids seemed to dominate our attention and air raid drills never became tiresome. As soon as the gong chimed fire monitors in each Form would close doors and windows as the Forms would proceed downwards to the Hall to receive respirators. How funny we all looked in those! After we all piled into the basement cheerfully and calmly, all in a matter of mere seconds. It even became a race to see if we could beat our previous time. The best part was that the next morning we could arrive at school half an hour late to make up for any sleep lost the night before.

How carefree and untainted we were, without any idea or inclination of death. No, we could not see any suffering under the layers of simple joys and propaganda blankets. The pure innocence of the child I was had not been broken by the truth of looming death. Our simple happiness not yet shattered by shards of shrapnel.