

OVER HERE

The Story of a War Bride

FIRST INSTALLMENT.
NOVEMBER.

I AM 18 years old today, and it's very important. I am now grown up. Yesterday I was a little girl—technically as they say, a little girl. Today I am anybody's equal. I could go down town to a restaurant and order tea by myself if I wanted to. I could have done that before, of course, but I was rather on my honor not to. The difference is that I am not going to be on my honor about things like that any more. I have given notice.

I shall do the sort of thing that is fitting and becoming at my age, and mother and father will have to understand that, and trust me. I shall be both discreet and worldly. Most of the official chaperons are nursing the French wounded anyhow, so the younger set—I am now the younger set—have to look out for themselves much more than they had to formerly when the world was not at war.

I say the world, but we are not at war, yet, thank goodness, and I don't believe we are going to be. I wouldn't have voted for the Democratic party for anything this fall, even if I had been grown up, then, and women had had the vote, but I was never so thankful in my life as when I heard that Woodrow Wilson was elected. I know he's for peace. Of course war is a very beautiful and magnificent thing, and a biological necessity and all that, and the deeds the ambulance corps and all those other brave boys of American extraction are doing are so wonderful that I for one wouldn't have missed knowing about them for anything; still when you come right down to it war is what Sherman said it was a long time ago—simply Hades.

I wouldn't like to have anybody that I know well go to war. I've two cousins who are nice stalwart boys of 21 and 23, respectively, a first and a second cousin. I like the second cousin best, for he is very handsome, and has one of those soft thick mustaches that last for about an inch and then are shaved right close up to. I think they are very fascinating, but he—Roland—is too affectionate by nature. The other one, George, is not affectionate at all, and not even interesting. Then I know a man who was at Plattsburg last year. He is 27 and looks perfectly stunning in his uniform, but he is very grown up, and treats me as if I were indeed a small kid. He reads Kipling to me though.

Among my birthday presents was my aunt's five dollars. She has given me five dollars on my birthday ever since the year one. [Joke.] I think I shall buy a Plattsburg manual with it and also I think that I shall buy about five pounds of chocolate almonds. I don't care so much for them, but Tommy, that's my 27 year old friend, is simply crazy about them. Soldiers, of course, are trained, among other things, to eat and sustain themselves on chocolate, so in a way it's a service to my country to spend a part of my birthday money like that.

I do want to serve my country. I do want the men I know to be soldiers and in a state of preparedness in their souls as well as their bodies. There is nothing more to be deplored than cowardice, and if any man I knew—Tommy especially—had even a touch of it I think I should cry my eyes out so they'd stay out, and I could never get them back in again; but if only Wilson or even William Jennings Bryan—whom I otherwise don't admire in any way on account of his making himself so ridiculous, about grape juice and calling his wife mamma and all that—will keep us from getting involved in this horrid world struggle—that's all I personally ask. I am patriotic, but I hope I shan't have to suffer for it, or have those I love in any way, suffer.

Eighteen years old; except for this small cloud of possibility, I am the happiest girl in the world. It is beautiful to be 18, and have everybody love one, and have one's allowance increased to fifty dollars a month. I am very tall and slender and I need to be

Elizabeth was 18 and had many suitors dancing attendance on her. At the outset she hated war, because it took some of them away. But the one she really loved she married. Finally he, too, went over. What his going meant, what trials her soul survived, how she finally knew the meaning of life and touched nobility in early maturity is told in "Over Here," the absorbing chronicle of war times. It is a story for every one, especially for every woman, because it is the story of all womankind in this, the world crisis.



Elizabeth

able to buy expensive drapery clothes, that look as if you had been stood up in a musical comedy and the chorus had pinned them all on you while the audience waited and the orchestra played and sang. The chorus sang, I mean.

My face is not very much to look at. My features are little and my nose has a small but unmistakable hump in it, which may have been admired on ladies of the Roman empire but looks the reverse of chic when it adorns a fin de siècle countenance. My hair again is slightly auburn, not startlingly so, but tinted that way, so I need to dress myself very carefully in order to create the kind of impression I want.

Eighteen today. I ought to put something down about nature, I suppose, or at least, it being winter—November, 1916, to be exact—the way I feel when I get on my horse and trot about in the park, or ride on top of a bus. I ought to set down some truly spiritual feelings about emerging into womanhood from girlhood. I'm crazy about it, but otherwise I don't altogether know what I do feel. I love to read poetry, but I hate to write anything that sounds even the least bit like it. When anybody says anything about it being a great big wonderful world I always think of that picture of the chicken hatching out of its shell. It is a great big wonderful world, and I am what my cousin Roland disrespectfully calls a chicken, nay, even a

squab, but that seems somehow to be all there is to say on the subject.

Also, I ought to say something about my mother, and here again I pause. My mother is perfectly all right. She's an awfully good looking person, and for her type she certainly dresses slickly. I tell her practically everything—and when I say practically I mean at least more than I tell any one else. What is home without a rubber plant and a mother? Mother is lovely—that's all. And every girl I know thinks so.

Father is a dear, too. He is youngish like mother, and perfectly stunning to go anywhere with. Mostly he is too tired to go out, but I would rather have him along as far as sheer looks are concerned than any boy or man I know. His hair is white at the temples, and grades up to jet black on the top of his head, which makes him look elegant and distinguished. He is not very rich, poor daddy, and I think it worries him a good deal to think that I can't have a send-off like some of the girls I know, who have houses and limousines and coming-out balls instead of living in an apartment on Central park with one maid and a half, the way we do, and a taxicab account that I'm not supposed to use except when it rains or I'm dressed for a party.

I think it distresses a business man after a while just to have to grub along and support a family without getting rich or famous or being anybody specially well known.

When father was young he went to Uruguay or Paraguay or some of those countries in the South Sea islands and had a wonderful time selling rubber stock and other exciting things, like a hero in a Saturday Evening Post story. Now all he does is to worry for fear that the business he has will be shot to pieces under him. I don't think it ever will, but there he is worrying about it most of the time. I am his only daughter, so I know. Only daughters are apt to look and act like their fathers, and to sympathize with them. It is the law of heredity. Mother inherits nothing from him of course, and her attitude toward such things is always very sweet, but she sees them from a Christian Science or why worry. It will all come out in the wash sort of angle. Mother is—well, not fat—but rather plumpishly inclined, which you'd hardly guess when she's corseted properly, and being mother she's always corseted properly—but father and I are the thin and agitated types.

The strangest thing about men and women respectively, though, is the difference in the kinds of things they get worked up over. I am very sensitive in a way, and father is very sensitive. We both get frantically excited at times, but never at the same sort of times. Father, for instance, is in a dreadful state about this country.

He says it is going to the dogs as fast as it can go—that we're a nation of four-flushers and pikers. He says we are just now in the most cowardly position any nation could be in, snugly assuring ourselves that this big struggle is none of our business, and that we are too proud to fight, because we regard our own convenience as the thing of paramount importance. He says the truth is we feel ourselves too good to fight—too superior, and that we gas and windbag and send notes—the language is his, not mine—for the same reason that any individual with a streak of yellow a yard wide talks instead of acts—looks on at the shedding of blood instead of mixing in with the fray.

Father gets perfectly melodramatic about this. Ever since the sinking of the Lusitania he has behaved like a man who has lost his best friend or friends, and there wasn't a soul on board that he knew personally. Of course, I felt that devastating tragedy deeply at the time it happened, there were so many young girls on board that might have had many of the same ambitions and emotions that I have, and who were or were not saved from an inkly grave in the cold black waters; but it was nearly six months ago, and I don't think you can keep looking backward all the time at anything so grim, but father is like Lor's wife. He'll freeze looking over his shoulder, I tell him.

Privately I don't blame the administration. I wouldn't tell father that. He'd take it to heart; but President Wilson has either got to send notes all the time, or fight. Every time a submarine sinks anything of ours we might just as well write the Germans about it as anything else.

There is graft everywhere. Every nation is looking out for the main chance a good part of the time. It isn't as if the allies had always been right in everything they undertook. They haven't. The Germans, of course, have always been wrong, they never had any decency of any kind, but the other races have fought wars of conquest and aggrandisement and all that. Look at England and her colonies and the Irish question. I don't know so much about them, but I know that there has been quite a lot of scandal about her behavior. Also the French are very mean, I've been told, and terribly on the make. Those consulates they have over there rob you right and left if you don't allow them to extort tips and other money from you. Elleen Douglas lived in Paris for years and she knows all there is to know from the inside.

In fact there's a lot to be said for America's keeping right on being at peace with the world. When you come right down to it, American citizens ought not to travel on boats at all now that the Germans have made it impossible to do so without these tragic results.

It is only about Belgium that I mind. I can pick flaws in the allies, but I can't say anything derogatory about Belgium. I had a little sister that died before I was born, and while I can't say that I feel specially attracted to her—she really was the flower of the family with all the angelic virtues and