

Pontypridd  
May 3rd

My dear Anne,

You will think I'm a long time in writing, but all this week I seem to have been too tired to move and in such a daze that I couldn't think. I can hardly believe that I am here and all my plans have gone agley. I wish that the baby would arrive now and then perhaps I can collect my scattered wits. The doctor says it is a marvel that I wasn't brought on. I can only hope that in the same way, it wasn't delayed. Everyone here is exceedingly kind, and offers of accomadation have poured in. The nursing home are taking me only because of the circumstances of course and the doctor is very kind.

What a week end. I can't believe it for it was so unexpected. Generally if the sirens go we don't even bother to come down stairs, but the syrens hadn't stopped when the bombs started last Saturday – about 10.30. The house rocked & glass flew & every minute we expected it to be our last. Three times they came back & we didn't get to bed until dawn. I heard that each time they went back to re-load as Bath had no defences whatever. We had one anti-aircraft gun running about. I expected to take ill every minute, but kept up during the night. By morning my moral seem to go and I could only weep. I stayed in bed until tea time. Dilys carried on cooking our dinner. & a neighbours. Charles & John spent the day sweeping up the glass and ceiling debris. I don't know why we didn't clear out that day for I fully expected them returning. We seemed too dazed to think and I was such a problem as I couldn't help. We rang up Mary Middlemas & she was out. The line to the nursing home was dead so Charles went down & Matron advised me to come in, for the night at any rate, as at least there was a nurse there & from home I could get neither nurse nor doctor. We thought it best too as if I took ill it would be a dreadful ordeal for the children – so I went and what a night. The nursing home was full of old people, mostly senile, bombed out from a nursing home in Lansdown Crescent. However I was given a bed, , Matron & Sister had to carry on alone , and a Commander Hawkins wife was in the labour room (next door), moaning all night. I must have dozed off for next I remember Matron rushing in, in operating mask & overall, to tell me to get up & go & sit under the stairs, - sort of open stairs in a big hall. She said she and sister were at the critical stage with Mrs Hawkins & all phone lines were dead, she couldn't get a doctor. She had to leave sister to carry on by the aid of a torch as by this time bombs were falling & the electricity gave out. Water & gas were also off. We all got downstairs, - a mother whose baby had only been born a few hours & another mother of a few days & all these old people & me. The glass flew, the doors opened, the roof crashed. It was an utter marvel no one was hurt, - and all the time that sister carried on herself with her patient. The baby was born in the midst of it, so she put mother & child under the bed. Every bomb that didn't hit us I imagined had hit Ormonde Lodge. The row was terrible for they were much heavier bombs than the previous night & the light of the fires could be seen through the frameless windows. However it was shorter & the all clear went about 4 am & they didn't return. We all got back to bed, (& what a business to get those old

people back. One man was 101, one woman 88 & they made objections to every thing). Casualties had come in by now – not bad cases but generally blast cases. They sat dazed like statues. I got up to my room. The window had gone, but we cleared the bed of glass & I lay there for 5 minutes when Matron said would I mind letting a casualty have it. So I got out again & came down stairs. I was put on an ottoman. Two other people in the room, one the 4 day mother whose ceiling had fallen & she had been brought down. There was a glass-less bay window & I lay & literally shook with cold. However dawn came & when it got light I felt I couldn't stay any longer, I was worrying so much about the family. One of the casualties had said that all Sion Hill & Lansdown were burning. So I got up & dressed & walked home. At first I couldn't see our house for the haze of smoke & dust, but when I did I could have fainted with relief. Much of Sion Hill was just rubble, and those lovely Georgian crescents were burning like fury, I could feel the heat. I got home & the family were alright. Charles was just setting off to meet me. He had tried to get round in the car but had to turn back as the roads were blocked. They lit a fire & boiled the little water we had – all services were cut by now. The roof in & ceilings down. We had only finished the big room on Saturday, Dilys husband did the walls & ceilings & she painted the wood work. We were going to make it into a nursery. The ceiling is on the floor now but I didn't go in. I hadn't the heart. The dining room is alright & the inner kitchen, & Pauline's bed room. The other rooms are not useable & from the top of the stairs one looks up to the sky. Pauline went to work & came back with the news that Mary Middlemas was killed. That seemed the last straw & I just couldn't stand another night at that nursing home. Outside the family that is the hardest blow, she was a fine woman & we had been friends with the family since we came to Bath. Jean Middlemas was to come to tea that day. She had joked & said she would be the last visitor. She was killed too, and Elsie. There were so many people we knew who were killed & houses I visited which were just rubble.

We talked things over, & decided we had better get out. Dilys suggested bringing us here & Livsays & Mrs Gorham we knew would take the others. So Charles got us off at once in the car for there were no trains from Bath. We just left the house. Fortunately we had the baby's things all packed. Otherwise we came as we stood. Dilys has been a true friend & I can't think however we should have managed without her.

Charles has made the windows as weather proof as possible. He can't do much more though he & John have been at it all week clearing up. There was no water, heat or light & they had to go to Bristol for a meal. He says that John's cheerful nature & resourcefulness is worth a fortune. He seemed to scrounge food from somewhere, miraculously & when not helping his Dad was round helping Captain Hopkins, who only has one arm. I've had a very graphic letter from him, with the spelling amazing – shuggar – for sugar., but he's certainly the boy for an emergency.

The rest you know honey but Oh Anne the beauty that was Bath has gone. All the lovely georgian architecture. It will never be replaced. It was a deliberate attack on the historical Bath – two nights running. The modern

jerry built suburbs he didn't touch & didn't even go for the works. They came down & dive bombed the loveliest parts. Many people who escaped the first night were killed the second. Hundreds were killed. The Assembly Rooms which cost £80,000 to renovate, are burnt to the ground & hotels flattened out. There was an unexploded bomb outside the Pump Room (where you stayed). I don't know if it has been immobilised. It seem wicked that such a town should be undefended. Julian Rd has gone & whole churches. In fact there is no Bath now save the modern uninteresting part at the other side. I dread going back though I'm longing to be home. What a blessing Bob was in hospital. I haven't seen him for a while, poor boy.

Your telegram came & Dilys will collect the things tomorrow. I never got the treasure cot, I don't even know if Mrs Walker is alive & the woman who was to come didn't turn up. Charles is coming down here & we will talk things over. I don't know what we shall do but we have the furniture. We shall have to live in the garden.

Well honey I'm getting very tired & Dilys & I are going for a walk. I wish all was over. Tell Edie I will write. Didn't you and she live somewhere about here when you were babies? I've heard Mother talk of Pontypridd. Martin is being very good & looks better. He was very drawn when we came. How I wish this ghastly war was over.

Dilys husband is expecting to go east any day. He came on 24 hours compassionate leave so she can see him again. He told her not to worry as he couldn't be in greater danger than we were & that is true & really if they get better food they are better out east.

I do hope that you are not having raids. I wish I could see you all. I feel that I'm truly in an alien land in spite of all the kindness and everyone is kind.

Dilys will telegraph any news.

Take care of yourself honey

Your loving sister  
Mabel