



One war to end all wars.
Five lives that are
changed for ever.

Remembrance

Carnegie Medal-winning author

THERESA BRESLIN

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About the Book

It's the summer of 1915, and the sound of gunfire at the Western Front can be heard across the Channel in England. And in the little village of Stratharden, the Great War is to alter the course of five young lives for ever.

A powerful, engrossing and truly epic novel, now with special new material from multi-award-winning author Theresa Breslin.

Read it – and remember . . .

REMEMBRANCE

THERESA BRESLIN

RHCP DIGITAL

This book is for Caroline

At the battlefields in France and Belgium teenagers wander soberly around the monuments. They push their poppies into the spaces between the stones of the Menin Gate and the little wooden crosses purchased in Ypres are crowded onto the grave of a young soldier aged fifteen – their age. Nearby runs the Yser Canal where the Canadian John McCrae wrote his poem ‘In Flanders Fields’.

At the Somme, around Thiepval and in Beaumont Hamel, they walk through preserved trenches and stand looking into the huge mine craters. By the roadside and on the hills they see cemetery after cemetery, collections of headstones among fields fertile with crops.

The white clay clings, and they spend time wiping boots before reboarding the coach.

‘Came over this morning, back home to Britain tonight,’ the driver tells me.

One is aware of great lies and great truths, a sudden consciousness of youth and vulnerability and a tremendous sense of loss.

from Theresa Breslin’s research notes, 2000

*You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.*

**Siegfried Sassoon,
from 'Suicide in the Trenches'**



Chapter 1

‘IT’S JUST NOT quite *respectable*.’

Charlotte took off her cape, hung it on the hall stand and faced her mother’s disapproving look. ‘It is a Red Cross uniform, Mother, and we are at war. I’m not trying to look respectable. I’m trying to be *useful*.’

Mrs Armstrong-Barnes frowned. ‘It is not just the uniform, Charlotte dear. I dare say you think me old-fashioned, but in my opinion it is not quite seemly to bicycle through the village dressed like that. When *I* was fifteen, young ladies—’

‘Mother,’ Charlotte interrupted, ‘it is a new century and our country is at war. Everyone should help in whatever way they can, and it is quite acceptable now for a young lady to train as a nurse.’ Charlotte moved in the direction of the drawing room. ‘Has Helen served tea?’

‘You are changing the subject,’ Charlotte’s mother protested as she followed her. ‘If you feel the need to help out you could easily become involved in a different type of war work.’

Charlotte knew what her mother had in mind for her, and as they sat down on the sofa together she tried to think of a way to forestall the argument. ‘Please accept that this is what I want to do,’ she said gently. ‘It would not suit me to organize charity functions, I want to contribute in a more direct way, and taking a nursing certificate is a very practical thing to do.’

Her mother gave a little shake of her head. ‘It might become *too* practical,’ she said. ‘One hears things about hospitals ...’

‘Oh, *Mother*,’ said Charlotte, pulling off her cap and causing her hair to loosen and fall about her face. ‘You have no need to worry about my being upset. I am not allowed to do any advanced nursing, and we have no war wounded. The Cottage Hospital takes civilian cases only.’

‘Even so ...’ her mother sighed. ‘I wish your father were still alive so that he might talk to you. You are so very young ...’ she reached over and tucked a strand of Charlotte’s blond hair behind her ear, ‘... and so very determined. You were always such a gentle child, and yet when we discuss this subject I cannot persuade you to change your mind.’

‘Because I think it is the right thing to do.’ Charlotte spoke urgently. ‘The War wasn’t over by Christmas last year as people said it might be. We are now in the second summer of fighting and trained nurses will be needed if it lasts another year.’

‘Who is talking of war?’ said a voice in amusement. ‘Not my little sister, pretending to understand politics?’

Charlotte looked up as her brother, sketch-book under his arm, came into the room. ‘Stop teasing, Francis,’ she said. ‘Everyone talks about the War situation. And although I do not read of it as much as you do, I hear enough to know that the Allies are not advancing as quickly as expected.’

‘We won at Neuve Chapelle, didn’t we?’ Mrs Armstrong-Barnes looked at Francis. ‘I read that in the newspaper.’

‘One has to do more than read the headlines and the official news in order to find out what is going on over there,’ said Francis, helping himself to a scone from the tiered cakestand on the table. He took a teacup from his mother. ‘We lost a lot of men at Neuve Chapelle. I agree with Charlotte. I think the War will last longer than another year.’

‘Well, I only read the interesting bits of the newspaper,’ said their mother. ‘The part that tells you what is

happening here – that is what concerns me. Did you know that your cousin Eugenie has become engaged to Adrian Vermont? He is one of the Vermonsts of York, a very well thought of family.’ She bit daintily into her cake.

Charlotte stirred her tea briskly. ‘Well, good luck to Cousin Eugenie,’ she said. ‘If it is the same Adrian Vermont I recall meeting at their Midsummer Ball, then she is very welcome to him. His family may be well thought of. I thought he was very spotty and incredibly dull.’

‘Charlotte!’ cried her mother. ‘Don’t be vulgar.’

‘Actually,’ said Francis seriously, ‘home news should be the most important part of any newspaper. There is far too much patriotic drum-beating. It is quite wrong.’

‘Do you really think it is wrong?’ asked Charlotte. She looked across the room to where her brother stood, tall and handsome, with the same blond hair as herself. For all the banter between them she had a great respect for him. Older by almost seven years, he had always been her hero, her protector when the local children had called her names because they lived in such a large house. She greatly valued his opinion.

‘Who in their right mind would want to go to war?’ said Francis. ‘Not the ordinary Prussian or Frenchman, I’ll wager. What makes a human being want to kill another who has done him no personal harm? Patriotism. The one thing that can unite people. It takes priority over religious differences, or class, or money, or social position. And then people can be manipulated by others for reasons of power or to gain a few acres of land.’ There was a high colour on Francis’s cheeks though his face was pale. ‘Men and women will die for their country, and unscrupulous leaders use this.’

‘Really, Francis,’ chided his mother. ‘You shouldn’t talk like that. It’s ... it’s disloyal.’

Francis shrugged and smiled at Charlotte.

‘And there you have it,’ he said. He stood up. ‘It’s going to be another fine evening. Care for a walk down to the village before dinner?’

Charlotte jumped up at once.

‘Oh yes!’ she cried. ‘Give me some minutes to change.’

She ran quickly out of the room and up the stairs. Her bedroom looked out over the back of the house to the washing green, the kitchen gardens and the long glass houses by the end wall. She could see the gardener’s lad moving between the vegetable rows hoeing the dry earth. Annie the housekeeper came out from the back kitchen with a large wicker washing basket on her hip. She set it down and began unpegging the clothes, the white linen sheets and shirts. Charlotte heard the murmur of their voices. She stood for a few moments by her open window and inhaled the soft fragrant smell of summer.

There was a climbing rose trailing along her window ledge, in full bloom and heavily scented. She pulled a few petals and scattered them in the basin of warm water which Helen, the maid, had left on her night table. It would be good to get out of her starched clothes and away from the smell of disinfectant. When Charlotte had heard that they needed help at the hospital because so many nurses had gone to France she had volunteered at once. Most of her mother’s servants were now occupied with war work. Charlotte’s own governess had joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment, and to Charlotte this had seemed a more productive way of spending her days than learning housekeeping skills from her mother. Charlotte knew that her mother was unhappy with both her children at the moment. She had expected Charlotte to be a dutiful daughter content to remain at home, and as for Francis ... Charlotte’s brow wrinkled as she thought about her brother who, since he had returned from University, spent his time helping manage the estate or sketching, and steadfastly refused to consider applying for a commission in the Army.

Charlotte was aware that Francis was deeply troubled by the conduct of the War, and was at a loss as to how to lift his spirits. He seemed to enjoy being out of doors with his sketch-book, and it had become a custom with them to take a walk each evening before dinner.

Charlotte sponged herself and changed quickly into a day dress, choosing one of finest cotton lawn with a delicate pattern of muted blue flowers which brought up the colour of her grey eyes. The dress draped her slim figure from neck to ankle. She redid her hair, deftly sweeping it up and coiling it on top of her head. Now ... she looked at herself in the mirror ... a hat or not? This was an important consideration. Her mother would be faintly scandalized if her daughter walked out hatless. But she was probably resting before dinner and Charlotte would not be subjected to her critical gaze. And it was essential that Charlotte achieve exactly the right effect, for this was not the casual stroll that her mother might imagine it to be. Charlotte knew to the last detail in which direction their walk was going to take them, and precisely whom she was going to encounter. She rummaged through her hatboxes and eventually picked out a straw boater with a blue ribbon round the crown. She set it straight on her head. Mmm ... too severe. She tilted it back a shade – that was better. Now if she felt a little overdressed she could quickly take it off and swing it idly in her hand.

‘Are you ready, little sister?’

Charlotte ran to the window. Francis was standing in the garden below calling up to her.

‘Yes,’ she called back.

She checked her appearance one more time, pinching her cheeks sharply to give them more colour. Then she skipped happily downstairs.

Francis was helping Annie carry the washing into the house. ‘And how are all your children, Annie?’ Charlotte heard him ask as he set the basket down.

‘Well, Master Francis,’ said Annie, handing him the end of a sheet. ‘The girls are in service, good houses all six of them, and my two boys, Rory and Ewan, enlisted together a few months ago. The news from the Front had them all fired up. They’re training in Shropshire now with a lot of other lads from the village, and desperate to be sent off to where the action is.’ She said this last part proudly.

‘Let’s hope to God that they aren’t,’ said Francis fervently. He joined the sheet ends and walked towards her, folding it concertina-wise.

‘Now, now, Master Francis,’ said Annie, ‘you’ve been away at University too long to know what’s going on in the world.’ She took the folded sheet from him, and, doubling it up once more, placed it on the dresser. ‘Our country needs young men, and, thank God, we’ve got plenty. The Hun wants sorting out, and it’s up to Britain to do it.’

As Francis opened his mouth to reply Charlotte interrupted.

‘I’m ready,’ she said. ‘Look,’ she did a quick pirouette, ‘do you like my dress?’

Annie gazed at her fondly. ‘What a lovely young lady you have turned into,’ she said. ‘I remember when you were just a babe in your carriage. I always said that you’d grow up to be a beauty.’

‘Not just a beauty,’ added Francis as brother and sister walked arm in arm down the drive, ‘but diplomatic too, dear Charlotte. Don’t think I didn’t notice your timely interruption.’

‘Well.’ Charlotte laughed and patted his arm. ‘I don’t think Annie would have appreciated a lecture on the ethics of war. She is obviously very proud to have two sons in uniform.’

They had reached the end of the drive. To the right was the farm road going through a small wood and then into the gentle hills which surrounded their house. To the right lay the village of Stratharden.

‘Which way?’ asked Charlotte innocently.

Francis turned to her with a gleam in his eye. He patted his sketch-book which was tucked under his arm. ‘I want an interesting view to draw. You choose,’ he said.

‘Umm ...’ said Charlotte, feigning indecision. ‘I don’t know ... Didn’t you say you wanted a newspaper? There’s a shop in the village that is open just now – it would have the evening news.’

‘What a good idea!’ exclaimed Francis, joining in her play acting. He took her firmly by the arm. ‘Let us go at once and purchase a newspaper.’

Beside him Charlotte gave a little smile and quickened her pace. This evening, quite apart from the business of buying a newspaper, she, Charlotte Mary Armstrong-Barnes, was about to engage in some serious flirting.

Chapter 2

MAGGIE DUNDAS CLIPPED on the lid of the last biscuit tin and took a step back. All the tins lined along behind the shop counter were now closed over for the night. She glanced at the big clock that hung over the front entrance to her father's shop. Nearly closing time, thank goodness! Normally she didn't mind helping out behind the counter, but today she was tired. She was fed up walking back and forth weighing this and measuring that. The shop was so much busier of late, for despite being warned not to, people were beginning to stockpile non-perishable foodstuffs. Her feet were sore, and her head ached too. Listening to the constant talk of war depressed her. Her mother had been poorly for over a week now, and Maggie knew that after she had finished here she would have to climb the stairs to the house above and prepare the family dinner.

'Our Alex had better have those potatoes peeled and on the boil,' she said to her brother. John Malcolm Dundas was behind the counter making up butter portions and wrapping them in white greaseproof paper.

'I'm sure he will.' John Malcolm grinned at her as he eased the wire cutter through the block of butter he had taken from the barrel. 'He's more afraid of you than our Ma. Lend us a hand here, Maggie, won't you?'

'Deed I won't,' she replied sharply. 'I've done my share here today, and I've got Ma to see to, *and* the dinner, while you and Dad will no doubt come upstairs, sit in the easy chairs, read the newspapers and talk politics.'

'We're awfully cross tonight, aren't we?' her brother teased. 'You'll be rushing off to join the Suffragettes if we

don't keep our eye on you.'

'And why not?' Maggie faced him, hands on hips. 'Do you think it is fair and right that a woman is not treated equal to a man in this society today? Let me remind you that we are twins and Ma assures me that I was born first, and as such am older than you.'

'What's this! What's this!' Their father had come from the back shop, drawn by the noise of the argument. 'You will disturb your mother. You are always sparring, you two, you're worse than young Alex. Can't you keep the peace for more than two minutes?' He looked from one to the other in annoyance. They were so alike, he thought, and that was the trouble - like to look at with curly chestnut hair and eyes to match, and alike in temperament, quick to row, but fortunately also quick to forgive.

Maggie was already laughing. 'Sorry, Dad.' She came over and kissed him.

'What are you arguing about?' he asked, softening.

'She's going to join Mrs Pankhurst and break the windows of public buildings,' her twin declared mischievously.

'I'll break that butter pat over your head if you're not careful,' said Maggie. 'Will I close up now, Dad?'

'Aye, just see if thon wee boy's about first.'

Maggie crossed towards the door as her father got an old box and began to put some cracked eggs and bruised fruit in it. She went first to the window and glanced up and down the street, looking for the boy they only knew as 'Willie'. He was one of a large family from the poorer end of the village, where the houses were unsanitary and children played barefoot on earthen streets.

The main street of the village was quiet. Most people were at home having their evening meal. She waved across to Mrs Brunowski, the Polish lady who kept the ladies' outfitters on the opposite side of the street, then she leaned into the window and drew down their own dark blue blind.

As she did so she caught sight of two figures sauntering arm in arm towards their shop. Her lip tightened. Miss High-and-Mighty from the big house, and who was that with her? It must be the dreamy brother, freshly returned from University and full of new ideas, she'd heard, to tell others what to do, that had enough to do. And as for herself, Miss Charlotte, cycling up and down to the little cottage hospital every other day, playing at being a nurse. Well, she, Maggie, knew fine well what she was up to, calling in at the shop as often as she could for some trifling message. Making big calf eyes at her brother, and him so gullible he was lapping it up, like a cat at a saucerful of warm milk.

By the time she reached the shop door and began to close over the first half, Maggie had worked herself into a thoroughly bad mood.

'Are we too late?' enquired a pleasant voice at her elbow.

Maggie stopped struggling with the bolt and looked up into the handsome face of Charlotte's brother Francis.

'We only wish to purchase a newspaper,' he added with a charming smile.

'That's all right, I suppose,' Maggie replied grudgingly. She knew that it wouldn't do to offend them. Stratharden House always had a large weekly order delivered, besides which, some of the members of her family might actually welcome their company. She nodded and led the way into the shop.

'Sorry to delay you,' Francis said apologetically to Maggie's dad. 'I just wondered if you had a copy of the evening newspaper?'

'No bother, no bother at all,' said Mr Dundas quickly. 'I've the *Chronicle* here.' He handed Francis the newspaper. 'You'll be wanting to read the war news, I suppose?'

'Not *wanting* to exactly,' said Francis, 'but I suppose one should be aware of what is happening.'

‘Oh yes,’ agreed Mr Dundas, ‘we need to keep up with the news. Now that your University days are over you’ll want to be part of it. John Malcolm can’t wait for his eighteenth birthday so that he can go off and do his bit.’

Francis said nothing in reply. His sister had wandered across to the opposite counter and was intently examining the display case which held hair ribbons and lace handkerchiefs.

‘Can I help you?’

John Malcolm appeared at her side. She gazed at him with clear grey eyes which were on a level with his own.

‘I don’t know ...’ Charlotte hesitated. ‘My mother’s birthday is quite soon. It is so difficult to choose a gift for an older person, don’t you think?’

John Malcolm nodded vigorously in agreement.

Had Charlotte said that the moon was made of green cheese her brother would have agreed, Maggie thought sourly. She was suddenly conscious of her plain brown dress covered with her shop apron, and her hair not quite in place after a day’s work. ‘I’ll help the lady, John Malcolm.’ She spoke briskly. ‘After all, you are busy pricing the butter, aren’t you?’ she added sweetly.

‘Oh, don’t trouble yourself. I’ll come another day,’ said Charlotte. ‘You are almost closed and my brother has his newspaper now.’ She smiled and managed to meet eyes once again with John Malcolm, before she rejoined her brother. Mr Dundas covered the awkward pause in their conversation.

‘Are you still interested in drawing?’ He nodded to the sketch-pad under Francis’s arm. ‘I remember you as a wee lad, you always had a pencil in your fist.’

‘I haven’t had much time over the last months, but I’m hoping to take it up again more seriously.’

John Malcolm had taken off his apron. ‘Let me take our order for tomorrow’s milk up to the farm, Dad,’ he volunteered.

‘Right, son, fine. The slip is on my desk,’ said his father, taken aback by this sudden volunteering by one of his children to run an errand.

Francis and Charlotte left the shop. Maggie watched them go from the doorway. A few moments later her brother made to leave.

‘Don’t break your neck trying to catch them up,’ said Maggie as he went past her. ‘And I’m serving dinner in twenty minutes, with or without you.’

Her brother turned and walked away from her backwards grimacing and pulling the most dreadful faces until she eventually had to laugh.

Maggie shook her head. Her emotions were confused. Why should her brother not speak to Miss Charlotte Armstrong-Barnes? Over the last few months he had become quite taken up with this young lady. Was she so possessive of her twin that she did not want him to be fond of anyone else? Or was it this particular person she resented, and why? Had it anything to do with the girl’s wealth and position? If she, Maggie, protested equality for her sex, then it should be equality in everything, and both ways, up and down the social scale, shouldn’t it?

‘Any spoiled goods, miss?’ pleaded a small voice beside her.

The ragamuffin child had detached himself from the side of the wall next to the shop and was standing before her.

‘Go inside,’ said Maggie kindly, ‘my dad may have something for you.’

It was hard to tell what age he was, with spindly arms and legs sticking out of outgrown clothes, his thin peaked face still pasty-white despite the long hot summer days. Maggie watched him run away up the street with his box clutched tightly before him. Where was his equality? she wondered.

Chapter 3

JOHN MALCOLM CAUGHT up with Charlotte and Francis on the bridge at the edge of the village.

‘Look at the water,’ said Francis, leaning out over the bridge. ‘How pure and clear it is.’

‘And the sound it makes,’ said Charlotte, ‘so pretty. It seems to be beckoning you. Don’t you think so?’ She turned to John Malcolm.

‘Beckoning you to do what?’ he asked.

‘Why, to let it run through your fingers, or paddle in the water as we used to do when we were children. Remember the summers when I was little?’ she asked her brother. ‘We used to walk into the hills with a picnic basket and find a stream to dam and then sail paper boats.’

Francis had opened up his sketch-pad and was making deft strokes with his pencil.

‘Why don’t we do it again?’ cried Charlotte. ‘I have a wonderful idea. We could all go on a picnic on the next Bank Holiday.’

‘I don’t know if I am up to tramping for miles and miles,’ said Francis, laughing.

‘You could ask Mother if we may take the car out and drive to one of the little lochs, and John Malcolm and his sister could come, and his younger brother too. I’m sure he would like that.’

John Malcolm could imagine only too well how much Alex would like that. Driving around the country in a real motor carriage. ‘I’ll have to square that away with my father first,’ he said. ‘The shop has been very busy lately,

and we always have lots of work to catch up with on holiday weekends.'

'And you will have to speak to Mother,' said Francis. 'I'm not sure that she will approve of you gallivanting about the countryside.'

Charlotte pulled a face. 'At the moment Mother does not approve of anything I do.'

'That is probably because your head is like my sister's and full of these new ideas of women's place in society,' said John Malcolm.

They had left the bridge and were starting up the country road.

'I'll sit here for a bit,' Francis called after them. He waved his sketch-book in the air. 'I want to see if I can catch the light on the water. Tell Mother I won't be late for dinner.'

'And what if I did think that women should be the same as men?' demanded Charlotte. 'Exactly what is wrong with that?'

'Do I have to remind you of all the ways that men are superior to women?' said John Malcolm, his eyes teasing.

'Hah!' cried Charlotte. 'That proves that you miss the point. You should not talk of superiority, but of equality.'

She had taken off her hat and was swinging it back and forth in one hand, which left, as John Malcolm was quick to notice, the hand closest to his free. In all the previous weeks when they had spoken to each other they had never once been alone together. They turned the bend into the stretch of road which took them out of sight of the village but not yet in view of Charlotte's house. He moved closer, chewed his lip. 'Would you mind if I took your hand?'

For a horrible moment she didn't say anything at all. Then still remaining silent she held out her hand. They walked in silence for a minute or two, he hardly closing his fingers around the hand that rested lightly in his. Now he

couldn't think of a thing to say to her. Usually words went flying off his tongue.

She spoke first. 'You were about to tell me,' she said, 'exactly how you were superior to me.'

He looked into her calm grey eyes, and was lost for ever.

'I may have changed my mind,' he said hoarsely.

'Actually,' said Charlotte, 'I do remember an occasion when you were superior. It was one day in the village school. You were in some class above, and much too grand to be bothered with the likes of me. But my ball went on the school roof and I was standing by the railings crying, and you climbed all the way up and threw it down to me. I thought you were wonderful.'

'Really?' he said. 'I suppose I must have been pretty wonderful to climb up on the roof at that age.' He gave her a sidelong look. 'Do you still think I'm wonderful?'

'Oh, I didn't think you were wonderful for more than two minutes,' she replied. 'You asked me my name, and when I told you, you said, "Well that's a mouthful, I think I'll just call you Charlie," and you did.'

'"Charlie",' repeated John Malcolm. 'You must have thought me a terribly rude little boy.'

'Secretly I rather liked it,' said Charlotte.

John Malcolm looked at her. 'In one way it sort of suits you. Would you be offended if I called you Charlie now?'

'As long as you promise never to say it in front of Mother. She might faint away completely if she heard it.'

'Charlie,' said John Malcolm softly. He drew nearer to her as they walked on. 'That will be my special name for you.'

'You will let me know about the picnic?' asked Charlotte as he took his leave of her at the end of her drive.

'I'll give a note to Archie, the delivery boy, with your weekly order on Friday,' said John Malcolm.

'And you'll ask your sister? I would so enjoy her company,' Charlotte added anxiously. 'It's just that ... I'm

afraid if she doesn't accompany us then I will be unable to go.'

'Oh Maggie will come all right,' said John Malcolm confidently as he waved Charlotte goodbye.

But as he returned home he had misgivings which proved to be correct.

'I don't have time to go on motoring trips,' his sister said crossly.

'Maggie, please,' he begged her again.

Maggie was standing at the sink in the scullery crashing the dinner plates together in annoyance. 'No,' she repeated, reaching past him for the potato pot. 'I have far too much to do.'

'I'll help you,' he said desperately. He lifted the pan scourer, and grasping the pot began to scrub it furiously.

Maggie regarded him, hands on hip. 'There's a first for everything.'

'Dad said we could have the day off, and you could do with a rest,' said John Malcolm.

'All the beds need changed, and Ma is not up to it,' said Maggie firmly.

'You would enjoy it,' said her brother, 'and Charlotte particularly asked for you to come.'

'She doesn't want my company,' his sister snapped back. 'She wants *your* company, and you're such a gull that you don't see it.'

Her brother did not answer for a moment. Then he said:

'Perhaps I *do* see it, Maggie. Perhaps I want to spend some time with her. Her mother is very indulgent of her, but she might not be allowed to go unless there is another lady in the party.' He slumped sadly against the wall. 'I really like her an awful lot, Maggie.'

Maggie looked at her brother's crestfallen face and her good nature won through.

'All right then,' she said, and was grabbed and kissed all over the top of her head before she had the words out of

her mouth.

Chapter 4

THIS MIGHT BE the best day of the whole summer, Charlotte thought, as she awoke on the last Monday of August. She had left her window open the previous evening and as she lay in bed now she could smell and hear the world coming awake. She stretched her arms right up over her head. She was alive, she was nearly sixteen years old, and this was the morning of her picnic. Just for today, she would try to forget there was a war on.

Charlotte quickly got out of bed and looked at the clothes she intended to wear today. Last night the cream dress with the box-pleated skirt had seemed to her simple, yet classically elegant. Matched with a wide-brimmed hat she had thought to be plainly but strikingly dressed. This morning the outfit appeared to her eyes as too ornate and fussy. A little girl playing at dressing up. What would Margaret Dundas wear, she wondered, to suit her dark eyes and hair gleaming with copper highlights? Charlotte thought herself pale and insipid beside her. The older girl was half a head shorter as well, Charlotte remembered, making Charlotte feel tall and ungainly. She decided to wear what she had selected but replaced the heeled shoes with a flatter pair.

Helen, the maid, brought her a cup of tea as she was doing her hair. 'It's a beautiful day for your outing, miss. Here, let me help you with that.' She set the cup and saucer down and fixed some pins in Charlotte's hair.

'What do you think of my dress, Helen?' Charlotte asked her.

'It's lovely. Just perfect for a summer picnic.'