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Dear Uncle Frank,

It is a long time since I last wrote to you, it is nearly a whole year and it was about this time last year that I received your last letter. Therefore it is quite time that I wrote again to tell you how we are getting on in England. I know that you hear quite often from Marjorie and Mother and I know that Gwen will have told you lots of news. I do not know whether Marjorie has written to you since the bombing of Coventry on the 14th. of November although I know she cabled to let you know that we were all well and safe. Therefore I think that, in this letter, I will try to set down some of the sights and sounds that filled my eyes and ears on that dreadful night.

Mother, as you know has been staying with Doreen at Keresley, along with Uncle and Auntie, Marjorie, Kay and Helen. You will probably remember that Keresley is about 5 miles out of Coventry proper and in wartime that is a great advantage. Also better still, Golden green has wonderful cellars where they are able to take refuge during bad raids. Joe and I are staying at present with Mr. and Mrs. Parsons Snr. about 3 miles out of Coventry again, but we are to the south. Do you remember the Gibbet Hill on the main road from Coventry to Kenilworth. If you do you can perhaps think of us as being right on top of the hill in a house with a wonderful view all over the city. And it is from this vantage point that we witnessed the attack on Coventry.

We were all at home as we are these nights when it is unusual not to get at least an Air Raid Warning. No one likes to be out when the sirens have sounded and have the difficulty of getting back home in the dense blackout without any light to help. We were preparing to have supper which we have at 7.30. At 7.15 the sirens sounded and we took no more notice than we usually did. We just used to comment that the sirens had gone and then proceeded with our ordinary occupations. We all heard the sounds of planes uncomfortably close but as this also is usual we took no great notice. However the guns startled

us when they opened fire on the raiders and we sat up rather more. We have an idea at Gibbet Hill that if a raider is in the vicinity the guns will not open fire unless bombs are dropped as the gunpositions may give the Nazis a clue to their whereabouts. Whether this is right or not I do not know but I went up to investigate. The linen-room has a window that looks right over the town and it is to this room that I went. We do not have lights on the corridors upstairs as they are unnecessary and as no-one uses the linen-room after dark the curtains are not drawn. There was plenty of light coming in from outside for the night was beautiful. The moon was full and the town could be seen well from the moonlight. The stars were twinkling and the sky was very clear. But, there, in the direction of the centre of the city I saw fires already alight. This was only about 7 minutes after the raid had started. I went downstairs to report to the others and Mrs. Parsons and Evelyn, my sister in law went into the Hall which is fitted up as a kind of refuge room. The walls are supported with great lengths of wood and on top of these supports we have a wooden roof which would stop any plaster from the real ceiling from falling onto the heads of people sitting in the hall. Here we keep a large divan bed on which 4 or 5 people can sit in comfort and also, there is room for a camp bed to be set up in case it is needed. This hall leads off the main hall which is very big and the stairs lead up and round the hall like a gallery. Under the stairs we have a bed always made up in case anyone would rather sleep downstairs during raids. Also there is a small seat under the stairs near the fireplace. So you see we can be quite comfortable there if necessary. Also the billiard table would probably make a good shelter if it was wanted.

Fanny, the maid, joined the others in the hall and they eat their meal there.---rather difficult to manipulate knives and forks when the plate is held on the knees, but they managed.

Joe and I spent a great deal of time in the linen room and watched the raid. By 8 o'clock the raid was well started. From then until about 6.15 the following morning there was not one moment of quiet. The guns, the bombs the whistling and the commands given at the gunstations. It is difficult to describe that noise except that it was deafening. The ground defences were firing all the time. We could see the flashes from the barrels of the guns near us then the earsplitting bang as the shells left the barrel and seconds later the softer bump away up in the air

as the shells burst high above us in the sky.

Several times I rushed downstairs as I heard bombs whistle down too close to us and no-one can understand the way your heart can beat and not burst with fright. For I was terrified and I think that there were not many who were not. It is a horrible sensation to hear the planes buzzing around above you and to know that they carry loads of bombs which can and do cause such wanton destruction. We could see the great flash of flame as the high explosives pitched and then the spout of earth, timber and bricks flung into the air and clouds of smoke which drifted away. The house shook and rattled and we could hear pieces of shrapnel clattering down the roof over us.

This went on for hour after hour and the fires on the horizon died down only to leap up again as more heavy bombs and incendiaries dropped into them. It is an uncanny sight to trace the course of a plane by the flashing of the incendiaries which it drops. Thousands of incendiaries fell on Coventry and it is only through the great skill of the regular and Auxiliary fire services that more damage was not done. The people themselves put out hundreds of fire bombs but little can be done with the High Explosives.

Alec was on duty in Broadgate and he says it was a miracle that the firefighters were able to get away from the centre of the town. It seemed that every street was alight and that the buildings were collapsing like houses of cards. The death roll that night was heavy but how it was not three, four or five times more no-one can say. Considering the size of the raid that casualty list was slight.

About 3 oclock in the morning we made tea by boiling kettles on the fires which we had kept going all night long. There was no electricity for part of the night but it came on again about 12 o'clock and failed again the next morning. We had no gas in the house, or for that matter, in the city as the mains were broken and also the Gasometer was hit by high Explosives with a such crash that the house, even so far away was shaken like a leaf. The Gasometer burned all the night and was still on fire the next afternoon.

The fields around us were beautiful to see despite the horror we all felt. Hundreds of incendiaries fell at one time on those fields and fortunately they can do no damage there. They were pale green in colour when they first landed and then they turn red and many of them explode after they have been burning a moment or two. The planes, those everpresent planes were dropping very

un-necessary flares and our tracer guns were firing their orange coloured shells at them to put them out. It was a dreadful kind of bonfire night.

Joe went along to his work at 7 the next morning. It was only three-quarters of an hour since the raid had finished. He said it was a nightmare journey. It was so dark that he had to go dead slow to avoid craters in the roads, telegraph wires which were down, debris and also wrecked cars. He reached work after having to travel on pavements on his motor bicycle and also after having hauled the bike with him over piles of bricks. There was no-one about, for the services had gone off duty to try and snatch some rest before the gigantic task of clearing up began.

It was light before I made my way to work. The police from different towns had been brought in by then-- quick work too. They were asking to see our identity cards before they would allow us to proceed and unless we could give what they thought to be a reasonable explanation as to our business in Coventry we were not allowed in the town. In any case no-one was allowed into the centre of the city then. I did reach work eventually but I was unable to get into the place to work as it had been hit. ~~We had had two or three direct hits at the gatehouse and~~ several people were trapped there. But despite the damage work started in the factory the next week after only a day or two clearing up. Production here is in full swing again.

Fires were still ablaze in the town and there are piles of brick which are still smouldering even now.

I saw Marjorie and Helen at Morningside that day and learned with horror that they had been there all alone during the night as Alec should have had a night off duty but as the raid was so bad he had gone to help fire-fighting. Fortunately they were all right although the windows were smashed and tiles off the roof.

Coventry is not the old Coventry any more. The centre of the town is wiped out and every street has, it seems, received heavy damage at the hands of the Germans. But, the spirit of Coventry is greater than ever before. People have not moaned. They have shopped as and where they could. They have managed about drinking water somehow, they have managed and are still managing without gas and some without electricity even now. But they are not beaten. They are sad that their homes, maybe their friends and also their families are gone but they are unbeaten. I feel so proud that I am a Coventrian. They are a great people in this city and that is the highest praise that can be bestowed upon them. They have stood up to a savage and cruel

attack as if they were soldiers in the firing line. They are fine. They have beaten the Germans by their very fortitude and stoical courage in adversity. We shall arise again and perhaps 'poor old Coventry' will become a beautiful and everlasting city as a memorial to the greatness of her people.

The damage is being put right quickly. The city is in the hands of the military police for thousands of soldiers have the task of getting the town habitable. It is a big job but we are progressing in the right direction. Our factories are working, our people have courage and we shall win this struggle and count the ruin and danger well worth the peace we shall have won in the end.

But, no more about raids. I hear that Stewart and Eleanor have a new daughter, Helen Star. I am so glad and should like to write to them in congratulation. I do not know if Marjorie has the address, if not, perhaps you will let me have it.

I hope that you and Auntie Helen are keeping well. I should be so glad to see you again. Perhaps after the war you will be able to pay us a visit and perhaps, who knows that one day you will hear a knock on your door ~~and open it to find a great, tall, grinning girl on your~~ doorstep, like the one in the photograph I am sending with this letter. One day I hope to pay a visit to America and I hope it will be soon.

Mother is very well although she is nervous. She is going to live in a small cottage close to Doreens'. She is delighted about it. Bobbie, (Teddies fiancée) will stay with her as she is nervous now of Coventry after having been hurt in a previous air-raid. Uncle and Auntie will stay there too along with Auntie Mary. Poor soul, she lost everything she possessed on Nov. 14th. It will be a bit of a squeeze in a small cottage but who cares--company is good and the tiniest cottage is preferable to a large house when it is outside the real danger zone.

Joe and I are getting on very well. We are so happy and contented that we can put up with any number of air-raids as long as we are together. He is working on Aircraft production and likes it immensely. He has never worked for a firm before and finds the company fine and the release from business problems perhaps even more.

I shall look forward to hearing from you soon. Give Gwen my love and tell her we should like to hear from her too.

Much love to all
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