

My father was called up for military service in April 1917, the fourth year of World War I, and posted as '*Landsturmpflichtiger Arzt*' (Doctor on Militia Service) to War Hospital I, Brussels, in German-occupied Belgium. He remained there for 22 months until after the end of the War, being briefly transferred to other hospitals in Belgium from time to time.

My parents had been married in 1910, and until he was called up, my father had slowly built up a good practice as a medical practitioner and consultant in children's and internal diseases. My parents were living at, and my father was working in, the large and very comfortable flat they rented in the corner house of Landgrafen Strasse 10, Berlin W. 62. He must have been able to have his call-up postponed to 1917, as during August 1916 his son (A.R.M.) was born, and I am certain that as a doctor and loving husband, he would have been present, and perhaps assisted, at my birth.

Physically, the correspondence consists of a 4 cm thick bundle of 30 letters and postcards, the majority in grey-coloured envelopes, marked *Feldpostbrief* without stamps (Military Mail), giving the name of the sender prominently. This bundle must have been preserved with love and care by my father over 22 years, and on his death in 1941 was passed on to me. The most amazing aspect was the fact that three of his letters to my mother had never been opened until I did so 80 years after they were written. This I can only explain by the possibility that my father was on leave in Berlin, and therefore that by then, my parents thought the contents of the letters was out of date.

All correspondence is dated and shows that a regular weekly, occasionally even daily, exchange took place and that the Military Mail took only 2 to 3 days between occupied Brussels and Berlin. Each letter, written of course in German, in a pleasing and polished style, speaks of the deep love and affection that existed between my parents. Never a word of slang or discontent occurred and there is a constant concern for the worries of the other, the lack of consideration by the Military Authorities for my father's posting to smaller hospitals outside Brussels and for the great difficulties of my mother had to find sufficient coal for heating in the winter and obtaining enough food for herself and for feeding the small baby.

A few typical excerpts follow, but here I must record the feelings of a son who has had the opportunity of reading the love-letters of his parents long after their death. It was a deep emotional experience to learn of their constant concern about their baby's survival, with my mother's declining milk due to her poor nutrition, and my father's medical reassurance, all by mail ! Had they then expressed their feelings and emotions by e-mail, what would have been left for me to read after 80 years, unless they had printed-out all their letters.