



Title 423

Dr Walter Michaelis, the Author's father in Brussels during World War I in August 1918, while serving in a Military Hospital. Note in his right hand the cigarette of which he smoked an average of 50 a day. *Author's Collection.*

My father wrote in his letter (170530) that a colleague going on leave was taking a parcel containing meat to my mother in Berlin, including a special tongue, salted to keep fresh. It was a birthday present, and it arrived safely to her great delight. The letter was posted from Kriegs Lazarett III, (War Hospital) to which he had been transferred. It was very much smaller, as there was only one other doctor there, and probably situated on the outskirts of Brussels, no location ever being given in his letters. He stayed there for seven months.

From there he was transferred again, this time to a small place of only 2000 inhabitants called Hogstraaten, near Antwerp and close to the Dutch border. He announced this change in an express letter (171201), in which he also told my mother that his replacement had just arrived “a small, miserable, little Jewish medico, only one year after qualifying”. This description was no doubt given to indicate the insignificance of his own position in the eyes of the superior medical authorities. The letter finished with a plea for “another small bottle of cognac” to be sent to him. (Probably French war booty available in Berlin, but not in Brussels.)

At the time he gave the reasons for his transfer: No one should be privileged for too long a time by being posted in Brussels, and serving at battalion level for a few months was in the interest of the Military Medical Services and of benefit to the experience of the doctor himself. He was in Hogstraaten for 3 months and spent one further month at the Hospital of the Fortress of Namur, as his postcard (180315) told my mother. “Nothing to write, living with colleagues, conditions good” was the only text on the card.

Back to Brussels and this time at the German Polyclinic, as he wrote in his letter (180414), in which he also described a typical Sunday [see Title 422], no doubt happy to be back in civilised surroundings, although the Polyclinic with only 3 towels does appear somewhat Spartan. The notorious flu epidemic of the period brought a great deal of extra work to my father and my mother wrote (180716) that she hoped it would soon subside. She gave in this and subsequent letters further reports of Kurt's progress, although her letter of 181022 was never opened until I did so in 981108. My father returned to Brussels, as the last document in the series is a telegram from him, dated 190219 in which he gives his new address once more as the Hospital of the Namur Fortress. I do not know when he finally returned to Berlin, as the Armistice had been signed on 11 November 1918.

If I have in the above summary given only the factual details of the war time experiences of a doctor and his wife, I have deliberately omitted the constant expressions of deep love between my parents. These, I think, are too personal and not for general publication.